A Companion Volume to
"The Little Book of Modern Verse"

THE LITTLE BOOK OF MODERN BRITISH VERSE

SELECTIONS FROM THE WORK OF CONTEMPORANEOUS BRITISH POETS BY

Jessie B. Rittenhouse

EVER since the publication of Miss Rittenhouse's three anthologies of American verse, she has been urged to compile a similar volume of contemporary British poets. The period that she covers includes the second half of the last century and goes down to the present year. Two hundred and twenty-nine poems, from the works of exactly one hundred poets beginning with Henley, are included.

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THE LITTLE BOOK OF MODERN BRITISH VERSE

One Hundred Poets Since Henley

EDITED BY

JESSIE B. RITTENHOUSE

Editor of "The Little Book of Modern Verse," "The Second Book of Modern Verse," etc.

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
The Riverside Press Cambridge
1924

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The Riverside Press

CAMBRIDGE · MASSACHUSETTS

PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

FOREWORD

FOLLOWING the method employed in my former anthologies, of presenting small, intimate collections that shall be typical of the period rather than exhaustive, I have here grouped the work of one hundred poets, starting with Henley, whose departure from the Victorian tradition was so decisive and whose virile note challenged the Decadents. With his free forms and free spirit, his mood of revolt, Henley marks an epoch and is a fit starting-point for a book of modern British verse.

In covering a period, however, one must represent those who fell within it, whether or not they chance to be in key with our own time, and, even with the later poets, the word "modern" has a wholly different significance in England than in America, since their modernity is a matter of spirit rather than of form, the free-verse movement having had so little influence upon the more important of contemporary British poets.

It seemed unwise in this collection to represent the Canadian poets, since the field, if well covered, is so wide and would have led beyond the limits of this volume. The same may be said of Australia and India; hence the book is confined chiefly to poets of England and Ireland, poets with whose work we in America come more closely in touch.

It was a great regret that increasing restrictions of copyright prevented me from representing as fully as I had intended the work of William Butler Yeats and of

John Masefield, two poets whose influence upon their period has perhaps been greater than that of any others.

JESSIE B. RITTENHOUSE

June 12, 1924.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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To Messrs. E. P. Dutton & Co. for permission to include poems from "The Spires of Oxford," by Winifred M. Letts, from "The Old Huntsman," "Counter-Attack," and "Picture Show," by Siegfried Sassoon; from "Eidola," by Frederic

Manning; from "Poems," by W. J. Turner; and from the work of Patrick MacGill.

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To Messrs. Houghton Mifflin Company for selections from "Poems: 1908–1919," by John Drinkwater, and for a poem from "The Sea Is Kind," by T. Sturge Moore.

To Messrs. Harcourt, Brace & Co. for poems from "A Contemplative Quarry," by Anna Wickham.

To B. W. Huebsch, Inc., for selections from "Chamber Music," by James Joyce; from "Look, We Have Come Through" and "Amores," by D. H. Lawrence; from "Before Dawn," by Irene Rutherford McLeod; and from "Poems," by Wilfred Owen.

To Messrs. Harper & Bros. for a selection from the poems of Dora Sigerson Shorter.

To Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., for selections from "Poems," by Edmund Blunden; from "The Queen of China," by Edward Shanks; and for the use of poems by Robert Graves, William H. Davies, and Osbert Sitwell.

To Mr. Mitchell Kennerley for a selection from "Poems," by Richard Middleton.

To Messrs. Little, Brown & Co. for a selection from the Collected Poems of Philip Bourke Marston.

To The Macmillan Company for selections from the Collected Poems of William Butler Yeats, John Masefield, Wilfrid Wilson Gibson, George William Russell (A.E.), Lionel Johnson, and Laurence Binyon; from "Wild Earth," by Padraic Colum; "Songs from the Glens of Antrim," by Moira O'Neill; "Saturday Market," by Charlotte Mew; "Cherry Stones," by Eden Phillpotts; and for poems by Ralph Hodgson, by Norman Gale, and by James Stephens.

To Messrs. Robert M. McBride & Co. for a selection from the work of Geoffrey Dearmer and of Hilaire Belloc.

To Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons for selections from the Collected Poems of Alice Meynell, Robert Louis Stevenson, William Ernest Henley, and Francis Thompson.

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To Mr. Thomas Seltzer for selections from "Collected Poems," by Edward Thomas; for a selection from "Birds, Beasts, and Flowers," by D. H. Lawrence; from "Cæsar Remembers," by William Kean Seymour, and for a poem by J. Redwood Anderson, from "A Miscellany of Poetry, 1920–1922," edited by William Kean Seymour.

To the Yale University Press for the use of poems by Gerald Gould.

To the following British publishers thanks are also due for the use of selections from volumes whose copyright is controlled by them:

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To Messrs. Constable & Co. for a selection from the work of Gordon Bottomley and of Herbert Trench.

To Mr. Jonathan Cape for selections from the work of William H. Davies.

To Messrs. Macmillan & Co., Ltd., for permission to include the work of William Ernest Henley.

To Mr. Elkin Matthews for selections from the work of S. F. Flint and of Gordon Bottomley.

To Messrs. Maunsel & Co., Dublin, for the use of poems by Seumas O'Sullivan, Eva Gore-Booth, and Joseph Campbell.

To Messrs. Nelson & Sons for selections from "Collected Poems, 1897–1917," by Sir Henry Newbolt, and to Sir Henry Newbolt himself for his kind permission to include said selections.

To Messrs. James B. Pinker & Son for the privilege of including the work of Robert Graves.

To the Poetry Bookshop for the use of poems by Harold Monro and Michael Field.

To Messrs. Sidgwick & Jackson for selections from the work of Laurence Housman, Herbert Asquith, and Rupert Brooke.

To Messrs. Selwyn & Blunt for a selection from the work of John Freeman.

To Martin Secker for poems by James Elroy Flecker.

To Mr. T. Fisher Unwin for a selection from the work of A. Mary F. Robinson (Madame Duclaux).

Thanks also are due to Mr. Rudyard Kipling for his kind permission to include several selections from his "Collected Poems"; to Mr. Wilfred Meynell for the use of work by Alice Meynell and by Francis Thompson; to Mr. Clement Shorter for the privilege of including the work of Dora Sigerson Shorter; to Mr. Edmund Gosse for selections from his work; to Douglas Hyde for his kind permission to include two poems from the "Love Songs of Connaught"; and to Katherine Tynan Hinkson, Frances Cornford, Lord Alfred Douglas, and Sir Arthur T. Quiller-Couch for the use of selections from their work.

THE LITTLE BOOK OF MODERN BRITISH VERSE

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

1849–1903

INVICTUS

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

ENGLAND

What have I done for you,
England, my England?
What is there I would not do,
England, my own?

With your glorious eyes austere,
As the Lord were walking near,
Whispering terrible things and dear
  As the Song on your bugles blown,
    England —
  Round the world on your bugles blown!

Where shall the watchful Sun,
  England, my England,
Match the master-work you've done,
  England, my own?
When shall he rejoice agen
Such a breed of mighty men
As come forward, one to ten,
  To the Song on your bugles blown,
    England —
  Down the years on your bugles blown?

Ever the faith endures,
  England, my England: —
"Take and break us: we are yours,
  England, my own!
Life is good, and joy runs high
Between English earth and sky:
Death is death; but we shall die
  To the Song on your bugles blown
    England —
  To the stars on your bugles blown!"

They call you proud and hard,
  England, my England: —
You with worlds to watch and ward,
  England, my own!

You whose mailed hand keeps the keys
Of such teeming destinies
You could know nor dread nor ease
  Were the Song on your bugles blown,
    England,
  Round the Pit on your bugles blown!

Mother of Ships whose might,
  England, my England,
Is the fierce old Sea's delight,
  England, my own!
Chosen daughter of the Lord,
Spouse-in-Chief of the ancient sword,
There's the menace of the Word
  In the Song on your bugles blown,
    England —
  Out of heaven on your bugles blown!

ON THE WAY TO KEW

On the way to Kew,
By the river old and gray,
Where in the Long Ago
We laughed and loitered so,
I met a ghost to-day,
A ghost that told of you —
A ghost of low replies
And sweet inscrutable eyes,
Coming up from Richmond
As you used to do.

By the river old and gray,
The enchanted Long Ago

Murmured and smiled anew.
On the way to Kew,
March had the laugh of May,
The bare boughs looked aglow,
And old, immortal words
Sang in my breast like birds,
Coming up from Richmond
As I used with you.

With the life of Long Ago
Lived my thought of you.
By the river old and gray
Flowing his appointed way
As I watched I knew
What is so good to know —
Not in vain, not in vain,
Shall I look for you again,
Coming up from Richmond
On the way to Kew.

MARGARITÆ SORORI

A LATE lark twitters from the quiet skies;
And from the west,
Where the sun, his day's work ended,
Lingers as in content,
There falls on the old, gray city
An influence luminous and serene,
A shining peace.

The smoke ascends
In a rosy-and-golden haze. The spires
Shine, and are changed. In the valley

Shadows rise. The lark sings on. The sun,
Closing his benediction,
Sinks, and the darkening air
Thrills with a sense of the triumphing night —
Night with her train of stars
And her great gift of sleep.

So be my passing!
My task accomplished and the long day done,
My wages taken, and in my heart
Some late lark singing,
Let me be gathered to the quiet west,
The sundown splendid and serene,
Death.

EDMUND GOSSE

1849

THE FEAR OF DEATH

Last night I woke and found between us drawn —
Between us, where no mortal fear may creep —
The vision of Death dividing us in sleep;
And suddenly I thought, Ere light shall dawn
Some day, — the substance, not the shadow, of Death
Shall cleave us like a sword. The vision passed,
But all its new-born horror held me fast,
And till day broke I listened for your breath.
Some day to wake, and find that coloured skies,
And pipings in the woods, and petals wet,
Are things for aching memory to forget;

And that your living hands and mouth and eyes
Are part of all the world's old histories! —
Dear God! a little longer, ah, not yet!

LYING IN THE GRASS

Between two russet tufts of summer grass,
I watch the world through hot air as through glass,
And by my face sweet lights and colours pass.

Before me, dark against the fading sky,
I watch three mowers mowing, as I lie:
With brawny arms they sweep in harmony.

Brown English faces by the sun burnt red,
Rich glowing colour on bare throat and head,
My heart would leap to watch them, were I dead!

And in my strong young living as I lie,
I seem to move with them in harmony, —
A fourth is mowing, and that fourth am I.

The music of the scythes that glide and leap,
The young men whistling as their great arms sweep,
And all the perfume and sweet sense of sleep,

The weary butterflies that droop their wings,
The dreamy nightingale that hardly sings,
And all the lassitude of happy things, —

Is mingling with the warm and pulsing blood
That gushes through my veins a languid flood,
And feeds my spirit as the sap a bud.

Behind the mowers, on the amber air,
A dark-green beech-wood rises, still and fair,
A white path winding up it like a stair.

And see that girl, with pitcher on her head,
And clean white apron on her gown of red, —
Her even-song of love is but half-said.

She waits the youngest mower. Now he goes;
His cheeks are redder than a wild blush-rose;
They climb up where the deepest shadows close.

But though they pass and vanish, I am there;
I watch his rough hands meet beneath her hair,
Their broken speech sounds sweet to me like prayer.

Ah! now the rosy children come to play,
And romp and struggle with the new-mown hay;
Their clear high voices sound from far away.

They know so little why the world is sad,
They dig themselves warm graves and yet are glad;
Their muffled screams and laughter make me mad!

I long to go and play among them there;
Unseen, like wind, to take them by the hair,
And gently make their rosy cheeks more fair.

The happy children! full of frank surprise,
And sudden whims and innocent ecstasies;
What godhead sparkles from their liquid eyes!

No wonder round those urns of mingled clays
The Tuscan potters fashioned in old days,
And coloured like the torrid earth ablaze,

We find the little gods and loves portrayed,
Through ancient forests wandering undismayed,
Or gathered, whispering, in some pleasant glade.

They knew, as I do now, what keen delight
A strong man feels to watch the tender flight
Of little children playing in his sight.

I do not hunger for a well-stored mind,
I only wish to live my life, and find
My heart in unison with all mankind.

My life is like the single dewy star
That trembles on the horizon's primrose-bar, —
A microcosm where all things living are.

And if, among the noiseless grasses, Death
Should come behind and take away my breath,
I should not rise as one who sorroweth;

For I should pass, but all the world would be
Full of desire and young delight and glee,
And why should men be sad through loss of me?

The light is dying; in the silver blue
The young moon shines from her bright window
through:
The mowers all are gone, and I go too.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

1850–1894

MY WIFE

Trusty, dusky, vivid, true,
With eyes of gold and bramble-dew,
Steel-true, and blade-straight,
The great artificer
Made my mate.

Honour, anger, valour, fire;
A love that life could never tire,
Death quench or evil stir,
The mighty master
Gave to her.

Teacher, tender, comrade, wife,
A fellow-farer true through life,
Heart-whole and soul-free
The august father
Gave to me.

ROMANCE

I will make you brooches and toys for your delight
Of bird-song at morning and star-shine at night.
I will make a palace fit for you and me
Of green days in forests and blue days at sea.

I will make my kitchen, and you shall keep your room,
Where white flows the river and bright blows the broom,

And you shall wash your linen and keep your body white
In rainfall at morning and dewfall at night.

And this shall be for music when no one else is near,
The fine song for singing, the rare song to hear!
That only I remember, that only you admire,
Of the broad road that stretches and the roadside fire.

THE CELESTIAL SURGEON

If I have faltered more or less
In my great task of happiness;
If I have moved among my race
And shown no glorious morning face;
If beams from happy human eyes
Have moved me not; if morning skies,
Books, and my food, and summer rain
Knocked on my sullen heart in vain: —
Lord, thy most pointed pleasure take
And stab my spirit broad awake;
Or, Lord, if too obdurate I,
Choose thou, before that spirit die,
A piercing pain, a killing sin,
And to my dead heart run them in!

REQUIEM

Under the wide and starry sky
Dig the grave and let me lie.

Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.

This be the verse you grave for me:
Here he lies where he longed to be;
Home is the sailor, home from sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.

PHILIP BOURKE MARSTON

1850–1887

WORTH REMEMBRANCE

Of me ye may say many a bitter thing,
O Men, when I am gone, — gone far away
To that dim Land where shines no light of day.
Sharp was the bread for my soul's nourishing
Which Fate allowed, and bitter was the spring
Of which I drank and maddened; even as they
Who wild with thirst at sea will not delay,
But drink the brine and die of its sharp sting.

Not gentle was my war with Chance, and yet
I borrowed no man's sword, — alone I drew
And gave my slain fit burial out of view.
In secret places I and Sorrow met:
So, when you count my sins, do not forget
To say I taxed not any one of you.

MICHAEL FIELD

EROS DOES NOT ALWAYS SMITE

Ah, Eros does not always smite
With cruel, shining dart,
Whose bitter point with sudden might
Rends the unhappy heart —

O'er it sometimes the boy will deign
Sweep the shaft's feathered end;
And friendship rises without pain
Where the white plumes descend.

GOLD

Yea, gold is son of Zeus: no rust
Its timeless light can stain;
The worm that brings man's flesh to dust
Assaults its strength in vain:
More gold than gold the love I sing,
A hard, inviolable thing.

Men say the passions should grow old
With waning years; my heart
Is incorruptible as gold,
'Tis my immortal part:
Nor is there any god can lay
On love the finger of decay.

ALICE MEYNELL

1853–1923

I AM THE WAY

Thou art the way.
Hadst Thou been nothing but the goal,
I cannot say
If Thou hadst ever met my soul.

I cannot see —
I, child of process — if there lies
An end for me
Full of repose, full of replies.

I'll not reproach
The road that winds, my feet that err.
Access, approach,
Art Thou: time, way, and wayfarer.

RENOUNCEMENT

I MUST not think of thee; and, tired yet strong,
I shun the thought that lurks in all delight —
The thought of thee — and in the blue heaven's height,
And in the sweetest passage of a song.
Oh, just beyond the fairest thoughts that throng
This breast, the thought of thee waits, hidden yet bright;
But it must never, never come in sight;
I must stop short of thee the whole day long.
But when sleep comes to close each difficult day,

When night gives pause to the long watch I keep,
And all my bonds I needs must loose apart,
Must doff my will as raiment laid away, —
With the first dream that comes with the first sleep
I run, I run, I am gathered to thy heart.

AT NIGHT

Home, home from the horizon far and clear,
Hither the soft wings sweep;
Flocks of the memories of the day draw near
The dovecote doors of sleep.

Oh, which are they that come through sweetest light
Of all these homing birds?
Which with the straightest and the swiftest flight?
Your words to me, your words!

FIONA MACLEOD (WILLIAM SHARP)

1856–1905

A CRY ON THE WIND

Pity the great with love, they are deaf, they are blind:
Pity the great with love, time out of mind:
This is the song of the grey-haired wandering wind
Since Oisin's mother fled to the hill a spellbound hind.

Sorrow on love! was the sob that rose in her throat,
I, that a woman was, now wear the wild fawn's coat:

This is to lift the heart to leap like a wave to the oar,
This is to see the heart flung back like foam on the shore.

Have not the hunters heard them, Oisin and she together
Like peewits crying on the wind where the world is sky and heather —
The peewits that wail to each other, rising and wheeling and falling
Till greyness of noon or darkness of dusk is full of a windy calling.

Pity the great with love, they are deaf, they are blind:
Pity the great with love, time out of mind!

O sorrowful face of Dierdre seen on the hill!
Once I have seen you, once, beautiful, silent, still:
As a cloud that gathers her robe like drifted snow
You stood in the mountain-corrie, and dreamed on the world below.

Like a rising sound of the sea in woods in the heart of the night,
I heard a noise as of hounds, and of spears and arrows in flight:
And a glory came like a flame and morning sprang to your eyes —
And the flame passed, and the vision, and I heard but the wind's sighs.

Pity the great with love, they are deaf, they are blind:
Pity the great with love, time out of mind!

Last night I walked by the shore where the machar
slopes:
I drowned my heart in the sea, I cast to the wind my
hopes,
What is this thing so great that all the children of
Sorrow
Are weary each morn for night, and weary each night
for the morrow!

Pity the great with love, they are deaf, they are blind:
Pity the great with love, time out of mind:
This is the song of the grey-haired wandering wind
Since Oisin's mother fled to the hill a spellbound
hind.

THE WASHER OF THE FORD

THERE is a lonely stream afar in a lone dim land:
It hath white dust for shore it has, white bones bestrew
the strand:
The only thing that liveth there is a naked leaping
sword;
But I, who a seer am, have seen the whirling hand
Of the Washer of the Ford.

A shadowy shape of cloud and mist, of gloom and
dusk, she stands,
The Washer of the Ford:
She laughs, at times, and strews the dust through the
hollow of her hands.
She counts the sins of all men there, and slays the red-
stained horde —

The ghosts of all the sins of men must know the whirling sword
Of the Washer of the Ford.

She stoops and laughs when in the dust she sees a writhing limb:
"Go back into the ford," she says, "and hither and thither swim;
Then I shall wash you white as snow, and shall take you by the hand,
And slay you here in the silence with this my whirling brand,
And trample you into the dust of this white windless sand" —
This is the laughing word
Of the Washer of the Ford
Along that silent strand.

THE END OF AODH-OF-THE-SONGS

The swift years slip and slide adown the steep;
The slow years pass; neither will come again.
Yon huddled years have weary eyes that weep,
These laugh, these moan, these silent frown, these plain,
These have their lips curled up with proud disdain.

O years with tears, and tears through weary years,
How weary I who in your arms have lain:
Now, I am tired: the sound of slipping spears
Moves soft, and tears fall in a bloody rain,
And the chill footless years go over me who am slain.

I hear, as in a wood, dim with old light, the rain,
Slow falling; old, old, weary human tears:
And in the deepening dark my comfort is my Pain,
Sole comfort left of all my hopes and fears,
Pain that alone survives, gaunt hound of the shadowy
years.

OSCAR WILDE

1856–1900

THEOCRITUS

O Singer of Persephone!
In the dim meadows desolate
Dost thou remember Sicily?

Still through the ivy flits the bee
Where Amaryllis lies in state;
O Singer of Persephone!

Simaetha calls on Hecate
And hears the wild dogs at the gate;
Dost thou remember Sicily?

Still by the light and laughing sea
Poor Polypheme bemoans his fate:
O Singer of Persephone!

And still in boyish rivalry
Young Daphnis challenges his mate:
Dost thou remember Sicily?

Slim Lacon keeps a goat for thee,
For thee the jocund shepherds wait,
O Singer of Persephone!
Dost thou remember Sicily?

ON THE RECENT SALE BY AUCTION OF KEATS' LOVE LETTERS

These are the letters which Endymion wrote
To one he loved in secret and apart,
And now the brawlers of the auction mart
Bargain and bid for each poor blotted note,
Aye! for each separate pulse of passion quote
The merchant's price. I think they love not art
Who break the crystal of a poet's heart
That small and sickly eyes may glare and gloat.

Is it not said that many years ago,
In a far Eastern town, some soldiers ran
With torches through the midnight, and began
To wrangle for mean raiment, and to throw
Dice for the garments of a wretched man,
Not knowing the God's wonder, or His woe.

SONNET TO LIBERTY

Not that I love thy children, whose dull eyes
See nothing save their own unlovely woe,
Whose minds know nothing, nothing care to know,—
But that the roar of thy Democracies,
Thy Reigns of Terror, thy great Anarchies,
Mirror my wildest passions like the sea

And give my rage a brother — ! Liberty!
For this sake only do thy dissonant cries
Delight my discreet soul, else might all kings
By bloody knout or treacherous cannonades
Rob nations of their rights inviolate
And I remain unmoved — and yet, and yet,
These Christs that die upon the barricades,
God knows it I am with them, in some things.

HELAS!

To drift with every passion till my soul
Is a stringed lute on which all winds can play,
Is it for this that I have given away
Mine ancient wisdom, and austere control?
Methinks my life is a twice-written scroll
Scrawled over on some boyish holiday
With idle songs for pipe and virelay,
Which do but mar the secret of the whole.
Surely there was a time I might have trod
The sunlit heights, and from life's dissonance
Struck one clear chord to reach the ears of God:
Is that time dead? lo! with a little rod
I did but touch the honey of romance —
And must I lose a soul's inheritance?

MARGARET L. WOODS

1856

TO THE FORGOTTEN DEAD

To the forgotten dead,
Come, let us drink in silence ere we part,
To every fervent yet resolvèd heart
That brought its tameless passion and its tears,
Renunciation and laborious years,
To lay the deep foundations of our race,
To rear its mighty ramparts overhead
And light its pinnacles with golden grace, —
To the unhonoured dead.

To the forgotten dead,
Whose dauntless hands were stretched to grasp the rein
Of Fate and hurl into the void again
Her thunder-hoofèd horses, rushing blind
Earthward along the courses of the wind.
Among the stars along the wind in vain
Their souls were scattered and their blood was shed,
And nothing, nothing of them doth remain, —
To the thrice-perished dead.

MARCH THOUGHTS FROM ENGLAND

O THAT I were lying under the olives,
Lying alone among the anemones!
Shell-coloured blossoms they bloom there and scarlet,
Far under stretches of silver woodland,
Flame in the delicate shade of the olives.

O that I were lying under the olives!
Grey grows the thyme on the shadowless headland,
The long low headland, where white in the sunshine,
The rocks run seaward. It seems suspended
Lone in an infinite gulf of azure.

There were I lying under the olives,
Might I behold come following seaward,
Clear brown shapes in a world of sunshine,
A russet shepherd, his sheep, too, russet.
Watch them wander the long grey headland
Out to the edge of the burning azure.

O that I were lying under the olives!
So should I see the far-off cities
Glittering low by the purple water,
Gleaming high on the purple mountain;
See where the road goes winding southward.
It passes the valleys of almond blossom,
Curves round the crag o'er the steep-hanging orchards,
Where almond and peach are aflush 'mid the olives —
Hardly the amethyst sea shines through them —
Over it cypress on solemn cypress
Lead to the lonely pilgrimage places.

O that I were dreaming under the olives!
Hearing alone on a sun-steeped headland
A crystalline wave, almost inaudible,
Steal round the shore; and thin, far off,
The shepherd's music. So did it sound
In fields Sicilian; Theocritus heard it,
Moschus and Bion piped it at noontide.

O that I were listening under the olives!
So should I hear behind in the woodland
The peasants talking. Either a woman,
A wrinkled grandame, stands in the sunshine,
Stirs the brown soil in an acre of violets —
Large odorous violets — and answers slowly
A child's swift babble; or else at noon
The labourers come. They rest in the shadow,
Eating their dinner of herbs, and are merry.

Soft speech Provençal under the olives!
Like a queen's raiment from days long perished,
Breathing aromas of old unremembered
Perfumes and shining in dust-covered places
With sudden hints of forgotten splendour —
So on the lips of the peasant his language,
His only now, the tongue of the peasant.

Would I were listening under the olives!
So should I see in an airy pageant
A proud chivalrous pomp sweep by me,
Hear in high courts the joyous ladies
Devising of Love in a world of lovers:
Hear the song of the Lion-hearted,
A deep-voiced song — and oh! perchance,
Ghostly and strange and sweet to madness,
Rudel sing the Lady of Tripoli.

A. MARY F. ROBINSON

1857

AN ITALIAN GARDEN

Ah me, do you remember still
The garden where we strolled together,
The empty groves, the little hill
Starred o'er with pale Italian heather?

And you to me said never a word,
Nor I a single word to you,
And yet how sweet a thing was heard,
Resolved, abandoned, by us two!

CASTELLO

The Triton in the ilex-wood
Is lonely at Castello,
The snow is on him like a hood,
The fountain-reeds are yellow.

But never Triton sorrowed yet
For weather chill or mellow;
He mourns, my dear, that you forget
The gardens of Castello!

JOHN DAVIDSON

1857–1909

IN ROMNEY MARSH

As I went down to Dymchurch Wall,
I heard the South sing o'er the land;
I saw the yellow sunlight fall
On knolls where Norman churches stand.

And ringing shrilly, taut and lithe,
Within the wind a core of sound,
The wire from Romney town to Hythe
Alone its airy journey wound.

A veil of purple vapour flowed
And trailed its fringe along the straits;
The upper air like sapphire glowed;
And roses filled Heaven's central gates.

Masts in the offing wagged their tops;
The swinging waves pealed on the shore;
The saffron beach, all diamond drops
And beads of surge, prolonged the roar.

As I came up from Dymchurch Wall,
I saw above the Downs' low crest
The crimson brands of sunset fall,
Flicker and fade from out the west.

Night sank: like flakes of silver fire
The stars in one great shower came down;

Shrill blew the wind; and shrill the wire
Rang out from Hythe to Romney town.

The darkly shining salt sea drops
Streamed as the waves clashed on the shore;
The beach, with all its organ stops
Pealing again, prolonged the roar.

A BALLAD OF A NUN

From Eastertide to Eastertide
For ten long years her patient knees
Engraved the stones — the fittest bride
Of Christ in all the diocese.

She conquered every earthly lust;
The abbess loved her more and more;
And, as a mark of perfect trust,
Made her the keeper of the door.

High on a hill the convent hung,
Across a duchy looking down,
Where everlasting mountains flung
Their shadows over tower and town.

The jewels of their lofty snows
In constellations flashed at night;
Above their crests the moon arose;
The deep earth shuddered with delight.

Long ere she left her cloudy bed,
Still dreaming in the orient land,
On many a mountain's happy head
Dawn lightly laid her rosy hand.

The adventurous sun took Heaven by storm;
Clouds scattered largesses of rain;
The sounding cities, rich and warm,
Smouldered and glittered in the plain.

Sometimes it was a wandering wind,
Sometimes the fragrance of the pine,
Sometimes the thought how others sinned,
That turned her sweet blood into wine.

Sometimes she heard a serenade
Complaining sweetly far away:
She said, "A young man woos a maid;"
And dreamt of love till break of day.

Then would she ply her knotted scourge
Until she swooned; but evermore
She had the same red sin to purge,
Poor, passionate keeper of the door!

For still night's starry scroll unfurled,
And still the day came like a flood:
It was the greatness of the world
That made her long to use her blood.

In winter-time when Lent drew nigh,
And hill and plain were wrapped in snow,
She watched beneath the frosty sky
The nearest city nightly glow.

Like peals of airy bells outworn,
Faint laughter died above her head

In gusts of broken music borne:
"They keep the Carnival," she said.

Her hungry heart devoured the town:
"Heaven save me by a miracle!
Unless God sends an angel down,
Thither I go though it were Hell."

She dug her nails deep in her breast,
Sobbed, shrieked, and straight withdrew the bar:
A fledgling flying from the nest,
A pale moth rushing to a star.

Fillet and veil in strips she tore;
Her golden tresses floated wide;
The ring and bracelet that she wore
As Christ's betrothed, she cast aside.

"Life's dearest meaning I shall probe;
Lo! I shall taste of love at last!
Away!" She doffed her outer robe,
And sent it sailing down the blast.

Her body seemed to warm the wind;
With bleeding feet o'er ice she ran:
"I leave the righteous God behind;
I go to worship sinful man."

She reached the sounding city's gate;
No question did the warder ask:
He passed her in: "Welcome, wild mate!"
He thought her some fantastic mask.

Half-naked through the town she went;
Each footstep left a bloody mark;
Crowds followed her with looks intent;
Her bright eyes made the torches dark.

Alone and watching in the street
There stood a grave youth nobly dressed;
To him she knelt and kissed his feet;
Her face her great desire confessed.

Straight to his house the nun he led:
"Strange lady, what would you of me?"
"Your love, your love, sweet lord," she said;
"I bring you my virginity."

He healed her bosom with a kiss;
She gave him all her passion's hoard;
And sobbed and murmured ever, "This
Is life's great meaning, dear, my lord.

"I care not for my broken vow;
Though God should come in thunder soon,
I am sister to the mountains now,
And sister to the sun and moon."

Through all the towns of Belmarie
She made a progress like a queen.
"She is," they said, "whate'er she be,
The strangest woman ever seen.

"From fairyland she must have come,
Or else she is a mermaiden."

Some said she was a ghoul, and some
A heathen goddess born again.

But soon her fire to ashes burned;
Her beauty changed to haggardness;
Her golden hair to silver turned;
The hour came of her last caress.

At midnight from her lonely bed
She rose, and said, "I have had my will."
The ragged robe she donned, and fled
Back to the convent on the hill.

Half-naked as she went before,
She hurried to the city wall,
Unnoticed in the rush and roar
And splendour of the Carnival.

No question did the warder ask:
Her ragged robe, her shrunken limb,
Her dreadful eyes! "It is no mask;
It is a she-wolf, gaunt and grim!"

She ran across the icy plain;
Her worn blood curdled in the blast;
Each footstep left a crimson stain;
The white-faced moon looked on aghast.

She said between her chattering jaws,
"Deep peace is mine, I cease to strive;
Oh, comfortable convent laws,
That bury foolish nuns alive!

"A trowel for my passing-bell,
A little bed within the wall,
A coverlet of stones; how well
I there shall keep the Carnival!"

Like tired bells chiming in their sleep,
The wind faint peals of laughter bore;
She stopped her ears and climbed the steep,
And thundered at the convent door.

It opened straight: she entered in,
And at the wardress' feet fell prone:
"I come to purge away my sin;
Bury me, close me up in stone."

The wardress raised her tenderly;
She touched her wet and fast-shut eyes:
"Look, sister; sister, look at me;
Look; can you see through my disguise?"

She looked and saw her own sad face,
And trembled, wondering, "Who art thou?"
"God sent me down to fill your place:
I am the Virgin Mary now."

And with the word, God's mother shone:
The wanderer whispered, "Mary, hail!"
The vision helped her to put on
Bracelet and fillet, ring and veil.

"You are sister to the mountains now,
And sister to the day and night;

Sister to God." And on the brow
She kissed her thrice, and left her sight.

While dreaming in her cloudy bed,
Far in the crimson orient land,
On many a mountain's happy head
Dawn lightly laid her rosy hand.

WILLIAM WATSON

1858

APRIL

April, April,
Laugh thy girlish laughter;
Then, the moment after,
Weep thy girlish tears!
April, that mine ears
Like a lover greetest,
If I tell thee, sweetest,
All my hopes and fears,
April, April,
Laugh thy golden laughter,
But, the moment after,
Weep thy golden tears!

THE SOVEREIGN POET

He sits above the clang and dust of Time,
With the world's secret trembling on his lip.
He asks not converse or companionship
In the cold starlight where thou canst not climb.

The undelivered tidings in his breast
Suffer him not to rest.
He sees afar the immemorable throng,
And binds the scattered ages with a song.

The glorious riddle of his rhythmic breath,
His might, his spell, we know not what they be:
We only feel, whate'er he uttereth,
This savours not of death,
This hath a relish of eternity.

ESTRANGEMENT

So, without overt breach, we fall apart,
Tacitly sunder — neither you nor I
Conscious of one intelligible Why,
And both, from severance, winning equal smart.
So, with resigned and acquiescent heart,
Whene'er your name on some chance lip may lie,
I seem to see an alien shade pass by,
A spirit wherein I have no lot or part.
Thus may a captive, in some fortress grim,
From casual speech betwixt his warders, learn
That June on her triumphal progress goes
Through arched and bannered woodlands; while for him
She is a legend emptied of concern,
And idle is the rumour of the rose.

THE MIGHTY DENIER

Well he slumbers, greatly slain,
Who in splendid battle dies;

Deep his sleep in midmost main
Pillowed upon pearl who lies.

Ease, of all good gifts the best,
War and wave at last decree;
Love alone denies us rest,
Crueller than sword or sea.

FRANCIS THOMPSON

1859–1907

DAISY

WHERE the thistle lifts a purple crown
Six foot out of the turf,
And the harebell shakes on the windy hill —
O the breath of the distant surf! —

The hills look over on the South,
And southward dreams the sea;
And, with the sea-breeze hand in hand,
Came innocence and she.

Where 'mid the gorse the raspberry
Red for the gatherer springs,
Two children did we stray and talk
Wise, idle, childish things.

She listened with big-lipped surprise,
Breast-deep 'mid flower and spine:
Her skin was like a grape, whose veins
Run snow instead of wine.

She knew not those sweet words she spake,
Nor knew her own sweet way;
But there's never a bird, so sweet a song
Thronged in whose throat that day!

Oh, there were flowers in Storrington
On the turf and on the spray;
But the sweetest flower on Sussex hills
Was the Daisy-flower that day!

Her beauty smoothed earth's furrowed face!
She gave me tokens three: —
A look, a word of her winsome mouth,
And a wild raspberry.

A berry red, a guileless look,
A still word, — strings of sand!
And yet they made my wild, wild heart
Fly down to her little hand.

For, standing artless as the air,
And candid as the skies,
She took the berries with her hand,
And the love with her sweet eyes.

The fairest things have fleetest end:
Their scent survives their close,
But the rose's scent is bitterness
To him that loved the rose!

She looked a little wistfully,
Then went her sunshine way: —
The sea's eye had a mist on it,
And the leaves fell from the day.

She went her unremembering way,
  She went, and left in me
The pang of all the partings gone,
  And partings yet to be.

She left me marvelling why my soul
  Was sad that she was glad;
At all the sadness in the sweet,
  The sweetness in the sad.

Still, still I seemed to see her, still
  Look up with soft replies,
And take the berries with her hand,
  And the love with her lovely eyes.

Nothing begins, and nothing ends,
  That is not paid with moan;
For we are born in other's pain,
  And perish in our own.

ARAB LOVE-SONG

The hunchèd camels of the night
Trouble the bright
And silver waters of the moon.
The maiden of the moon will soon
Through Heaven stray and sing,
Star gathering.
Now while the dark about our love is strewn,
Light of my dark, blood of my heart, O come!
And night will catch her breath up, and be dumb.

Leave thy father, leave thy mother
And thy brother;
Leave the black tents of thy tribe apart!
Am I not thy father and thy brother,
And thy mother?
And thou — what needest with thy tribe's black tents
Who hast the red pavilion of my heart?

THE HOUND OF HEAVEN

I FLED Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the mist of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmed fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.
But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat — and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet —
"All things betray thee, who betrayest Me."

I pleaded, outlaw-wise,
By many a hearted casement, curtained red,
Trellised with intertwining charities;
(For, though I knew His love Who followèd,
Yet was I sore adread
Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside);
But, if one little casement parted wide,

The gust of His approach would clash it to.
Fear wist not to evade, as Love wist to pursue.
Across the margent of the world I fled,
And troubled the gold gateways of the stars,
Smiting for shelter on their clangèd bars;
Fretted to dulcet jars
And silvern chatter the pale ports o' the moon.
I said to dawn, Be sudden; to eve, Be soon;
With thy young skiey blossoms heap me over
From this tremendous Lover!
Float thy vague veil about me, lest He see!
I tempted all His servitors, but to find
My own betrayal in their constancy,
In faith to Him their fickleness to me,
Their traitorous trueness, and their loyal deceit.
To all swift things for swiftness did I sue;
Clung to the whistling mane of every wind.
But whether they swept, smoothly fleet,
The long savannahs of the blue;
Or whether, Thunder-driven,
They clanged his chariot 'thwart a heaven
Plashy with flying lightnings round the spurn o' their feet: —
Fear wist not to evade, as Love wist to pursue.
Still with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
Came on the following Feet,
And a Voice above their beat —
"Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me."

I sought no more that after which I strayed
In face of man or maid;

But still within the little children's eyes
Seems something, something that replies;
They at least are for me, surely for me!
I turned me to them very wistfully;
But, just as their young eyes grew sudden fair
With dawning answers there,
Their angel plucked them from me by the hair.
"Come then, ye other children, Nature's — share
With me" (said I) "your delicate fellowship;
Let me greet you lip to lip,
Let me twine with you caresses,
Wantoning
With our Lady-Mother's vagrant tresses,
Banqueting
With her in her wind-walled palace,
Underneath her azured daïs,
Quaffing, as your taintless way is,
From a chalice
Lucent-weeping out of the dayspring."
So it was done:
I in their delicate fellowship was one —
Drew the bolt of Nature's secrecies.
I knew all the swift importings
On the wilful face of skies;
I knew how the clouds arise
Spumèd of the wild sea-snortings;
All that's born or dies
Rose and drooped with — made them shapers
Of mine own moods, or wailful or divine —
With them joyed and was bereaven.
I was heavy with the even,
When she lit her glimmering tapers
Round the day's dead sanctities.

I laughed in the morning's eyes.
I triumphed and I saddened with all weather,
Heaven and I wept together,
And its sweet tears were salt with mortal mine;
Against the red throb of its sunset-heart
I laid my own to beat,
And share commingling heat;
But not by that, by that, was eased my human smart.
In vain my tears were wet on Heaven's grey cheek.
For ah! we know not what each other says,
These things and I; in sound *I* speak —
Their sound is but their stir, they speak by silences.
Nature, poor stepdame, cannot slake my drouth;
Let her, if she would owe me,
Drop yon blue bosom-veil of sky, and show me
The breasts o' her tenderness:
Never did any milk of hers once bless
My thirsting mouth.
Nigh and nigh draws the chase,
With unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy;
And past those noisèd Feet
A Voice comes yet more fleet —
"Lo! naught contents thee, who content'st not Me."

Naked I wait Thy love's uplifted stroke!
My harness piece by piece Thou hast hewn from me,
And smitten me to my knee;
I am defenceless utterly.
I slept, methinks, and woke,
And, slowly gazing, find me stripped in sleep.

In the rash lustihead of my young powers,
I shook the pillaring hours
And pulled my life upon me; grimed with smears
I stand amid the dust o' the mounded years —
My mangled youth lies dead beneath the heap.
My days have crackled and gone up in smoke,
Have puffed and burst as sun-starts on a stream.
Yea, faileth now even dream
The dreamer, and the lute the lutanist;
Even the linked fantasies, in whose blossomy twist
I swung the earth a trinket at my wrist,
Are yielding; cords of all too weak account
For earth with heavy grief so overplussed.
Ah! is Thy love indeed
A weed, albeit an amaranthine weed,
Suffering no flowers except its own to mount?
Ah! must —
Designer infinite! —
Ah! must Thou char the wood ere Thou canst limn with it?
My freshness spent its wavering shower i' the dust;
And now my heart is as a broken fount,
Wherein tear-drippings stagnate, spilt down ever
From the dank thoughts that shiver
Upon the sighful branches of my mind.
Such is; what is to be?
The pulp so bitter, how shall taste the rind?
I dimly guess what Time in mists confounds;
Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds
From the hid battlements of Eternity;
Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then
Round the half-glimpsèd turrets slowly wash again.

But not ere him who summoneth
I first have seen, enwound
With glooming robes purpureal, cypress-crowned;
His name I know, and what his trumpet saith.
Whether man's heart or life it be which yields
Thee harvest, must Thy harvest fields
Be dunged with rotten death?

Now of that long pursuit
Comes on at hand the bruit;
That Voice is round me like a bursting sea:
"And is thy earth so marred
Shattered in shard on shard?
Lo, all things fly thee, for thou fliest Me!
Strange, piteous, futile thing,
Wherefore should any set thee love apart?
Seeing none but I makes much of naught" (He said),
"And human love needs human meriting:
How hast thou merited —
Of all man's clotted clay the dingiest clot?
Alack, thou knowest not
How little worthy of any love thou art!
Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee
Save Me, save only Me?
All which I took from thee I did but take,
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home:
Rise, clasp My hand, and come!"

Halts by me that footfall:
Is my gloom, after all,

Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?
"Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He Whom thou seekest!
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me."

IN NO STRANGE LAND

("*The Kingdom of God is within you*")

O WORLD invisible, we view thee,
O world intangible, we touch thee,
O world unknowable, we know thee,
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee!

Does the fish soar to find the ocean,
The eagle plunge to find the air —
That we ask of the stars in motion
If they have rumour of thee there?

Not where the wheeling systems darken,
And our benumbed conceiving soars! —
The drift of pinions, would we hearken,
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.

The angels keep their ancient places; —
Turn but a stone, and start a wing!
'Tis ye, 'tis your estrangèd faces,
That miss the many-splendoured thing.

But (when so sad thou canst not sadder)
Cry; — and upon thy so sore loss
Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder
Pitched betwixt Heaven and Charing Cross.

Yea, in the night, my Soul, my daughter,
Cry, — clinging Heaven by the hems;
And lo, Christ walking on the water,
Not of Gennesareth, but Thames!

A. E. HOUSMAN

1859

FAR IN A WESTERN BROOKLAND

Far in a western brookland
That bred me long ago
The poplars stand and tremble
By pools I used to know.

There, in the windless night-time,
The wanderer, marvelling why,
Halts on the bridge to hearken
How soft the poplars sigh.

He hears: long since forgotten
In fields where I was known,
Here I lie down in London
And turn to rest alone.

There, by the starlit fences,
The wanderer halts and hears
My soul that lingers sighing
About the glimmering weirs.

'TIS TIME, I THINK, BY WENLOCK TOWN

'Tis time, I think, by Wenlock town
The golden broom should blow;
The hawthorn sprinkled up and down
Should charge the land with snow.

Spring will not wait the loiterer's time
Who keeps so long away;
So others wear the broom and climb
The hedgerows heaped with may.

Oh tarnish late on Wenlock Edge,
Gold that I never see;
Lie long, high snowdrifts in the hedge
That will not shower on me.

WITH RUE MY HEART IS LADEN

With rue my heart is laden
For golden friends I had,
For many a rose-lipt maiden
And many a lightfoot lad.

By brooks too broad for leaping
The lightfoot boys are laid;
The rose-lipt girls are sleeping
In fields where roses fade.

IS MY TEAM PLOUGHING

"Is my team ploughing,
That I was used to drive

And hear the harness jingle
When I was man alive?"

Ay, the horses trample,
The harness jingles now;
No change though you lie under
The land you used to plough.

"Is football playing
Along the river shore,
With lads to chase the leather,
Now I stand up no more?"

Ay, the ball is flying,
The lads play heart and soul;
The goal stands up, the keeper
Stands up to keep the goal.

"Is my girl happy,
That I thought hard to leave,
And has she tired of weeping
As she lies down at eve?"

Ay, she lies down lightly,
She lies not down to weep:
Your girl is well contented.
Be still, my lad, and sleep.

"Is my friend hearty,
Now I am thin and pine,
And has he found to sleep in
A better bed than mine?"

Yes, lad, I lie easy,
I lie as lads would choose;
I cheer a dead man's sweetheart,
Never ask me whose.

ERNEST RHYS

1859

WORDS

Words, like fine flowers, have their colours too:
What do you say to crimson words and yellow;
And what to opal, emerald, pale blue?
And elvish gules? — he is a glorious fellow.
Think of the purple hung in Elsinore,
Or call it black, and close your eyes to see;
Go look for amber then on Lochlyn shore
And drag a sunbeam out of Arcady.
And who of Rosamund or Rosalind
Can part the rosy-petall'd syllables?
For women's names keep murmuring like the wind
The hidden things that none for ever tells.
Last, to forego soft beauty, take the sword,
And see the blue steel redden at the word.

DOUGLAS HYDE

1860

RINGLETTED YOUTH OF MY LOVE

(From the Irish)

Ringletted youth of my love,
With thy locks bound loosely behind thee,
You passed by the road above
But you never came in to find me;
What were the harm for you
If you came for a little to see me,
Your kiss is a wakening dew
Were I ever so ill or so dreamy.

If I had a golden store
I would make a nice little boreen
To lead straight up to his door,
The door of the house of my storeen;
Hoping to God not to miss
The sound of his footfall in it,
I have waited so long for his kiss
That for days I have slept not a minute.

I thought, O my love! You were so —
As the moon is, or sun on a fountain,
And I thought after that you were snow,
The cold snow on top of the mountain;
And I thought after that you were more
Like God's lamp shining to find me,
Or the bright star of knowledge before,
And the star of knowledge behind me.

You promised me high-heeled shoes,
And satin and silk, my storeen,
And to follow me, never to lose,
Though the ocean were round us roaring;
Like a bush in a gap in a wall
I am now left lonely without thee,
And this house I grow dead of, is all
That I see around or about me.

MY GRIEF ON THE SEA

(*From the Irish*)

My grief on the sea,
How the waves of it roll!
For they heave between me
And the love of my soul!

Abandon'd, forsaken,
To grief and to care,
Will the sea ever waken
Relief from despair?

My grief and my trouble!
Would he and I were
In the province of Leinster
Or County of Clare!

Were I and my darling —
O heart-bitter wound! —
On board of the ship
For America bound.

On a green bed of rushes
All last night I lay,

And I flung it abroad
With the heat of the day,

And my Love came behind me,
He came from the South;
His breast to my bosom,
His mouth to my mouth.

KATHERINE TYNAN HINKSON

1861

FAREWELL

Not soon shall I forget — a sheet
Of golden water, cold and sweet,
The young moon with her head in veils
Of silver, and the nightingales.

A wain of hay came up the lane —
O fields I shall not walk again,
And trees I shall not see, so still
Against a sky of daffodil!

Fields where my happy heart had rest,
And where my heart was heaviest,
I shall remember them at peace
Drenched in moon-silver like a fleece.

The golden water sweet and cold,
The moon of silver and of gold,
The dew upon the gray grass-spears,
I shall remember them with tears.

THE LITTLE HOUSE

I WILL have a little house
When the children are flown:
The feel of a big house
Would be cold as a stone;
A house full of emptiness
And we two alone.

But in a little house
We could creep to the blaze;
We could warm our old hearts
With the thought of old days;
Him and me together
When the firelight plays.

There would hardly be room
For the ghosts to come in:
Ghosts of the little children
Who made a merry din,
Long ago and long ago
When I was a queen.

I will have a little garden
Big enough for two,
Where we can walk together
When the skies are blue,
Talking the good days over
And how fast they flew.

The littlest house and garden
For him and me just.
And all the sweet times we had
Withered to dust.

A big house would break my heart
For the children lost.

AMY LEVY

1861

EPITAPH

(*To a commonplace person who died in bed*)

This is the end of him, here he lies:
The dust in his throat, the worm in his eyes,
The mould in his mouth, the turf on his breast;
This is the end of him, this is best.
He will never lie on his couch awake,
Wide-eyed, tearless, till dim daybreak.
Never again will he smile and smile
When his heart is breaking all the while.
He will never stretch out his hands in vain
Groping and groping — never again.
Never ask for bread, get a stone instead,
Never pretend that the stone is bread;
Nor sway and sway 'twixt the false and true,
Weighing and noting the long hours through.
Never ache and ache with the chokèd-sighs;
This is the end of him, here he lies.

MAURICE HEWLETT

1861–1923

DIRGE

How should my lord come home to his lands?
Alas for my lord, so brown and strong!
A lean cross in his folded hands,
And a daw to croak him a resting song.

And in autumn tide when the leaves fall down,
And wet falls as they fall, drip by drip,
My lord lies wan that once was so brown,
And the frost cometh to wither his lip.

My lord is white as the morning mist,
And his eyes ring'd like the winter moon:
And I will come as soon as ye list —
O love, is it time? May the time be soon!

HENRY NEWBOLT

1862

DRAKE'S DRUM

Drake, he's in his hammock an' a thousand mile away,
(Capten, art tha sleepin' there below?)
Slung atween the round shot in Nombre Dios Bay,
An' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe.
Yarnder lumes the Island, yarnder lie the ships,
Wi' sailor lads a-dancin' heel-an'-toe,

An' the shore-lights flashin', an' the night-tide dashin',
He sees et arl so plainly as he saw et long ago.

Drake he was a Devon man, an' ruled the Devon seas,
(Capten, art tha sleepin' there below?)
Rovin' tho' his death fell, he went wi' heart at ease,
An' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe.
"Take my drum to England, hang et by the shore,
Strike et when your powder's runnin' low;
If the Dons sight Devon, I'll quit the port o' Heaven,
And drum them up the Channel as we drummed them long ago."

Drake he's in his hammock till the great Armadas come,
(Capten, art tha sleepin' there below?)
Slung atween the round shot, listenin' for the drum,
An' dreamin' arl the time o' Plymouth Hoe.
Call him on the deep sea, call him up the Sound,
Call him when ye sail to meet the foe;
Where the old trade's plyin' an' the old flag flyin',
They shall find him ware an' wakin', as they found him long ago.

MESSMATES

He gave us all a good-bye cheerily
At the first dawn of day;
We dropped him down the side full drearily
When the light died away.
It's a dead dark watch that he's a-keeping there,
And a long, long night that lags a-creeping there,

Where the Trades and the tides roll over him
And the great ships go by.

He's there alone with green seas rocking him
  For a thousand miles around;
He's there alone with dumb things mocking him,
  And we're homeward bound.
It's a long, lone watch that he's a-keeping there,
And a dead cold night that lags a-creeping there,
While the months and the years roll over him
And the great ships go by.

I wonder if the tramps come near enough
  As they thrash to and fro,
And the battle-ships' bells ring clear enough
  To be heard down below;
If through all the lone watch that he's keeping there,
And the long, cold night that lags a-creeping there,
The voices of the sailor-men shall comfort him
When the great ships go by.

ADMIRAL DEATH

Boys, are ye calling a toast to-night?
  (Hear what the sea-wind saith)
Fill for a bumper strong and bright,
  And here's to Admiral Death!
He's sailed in a hundred builds o' boat,
He's fought in a thousand kinds o' coat,
He's the senior flag of all that float,
  And his name's Admiral Death!

Which of you looks for a service free?
(Hear what the sea-wind saith)
The rules of the service are but three
When ye sail with Admiral Death.
Steady your hand in the time o' squalls,
Stand to the last by him that falls,
And answer clear to the voice that calls,
"Ay ay! Admiral Death!"

How will ye know him among the rest?
(Hear what the sea-wind saith)
By the glint o' the stars that cover his breast
Ye may find Admiral Death.
By the forehead grim with an ancient scar,
By the voice that rolls like thunder far,
By the tenderest eyes of all that are,
Ye may know Admiral Death.

Where are the lads that sailed before?
(Hear what the sea-wind saith)
Their bones are white by many a shore,
They sleep with Admiral Death.
Oh! but they loved him, young and old,
For he left the laggard, and took the bold,
And the fight was fought, and the story's told,
And they sleep with Admiral Death.

EDEN PHILLPOTTS

1862

EXPERIENCE[1]

When I was young I strove to glean
What fellow men and women mean,
And challenged eye of passer-by,
If peradventure I might know
The secrets of the heart below.

Now I am old, I only care
How fellow men and women fare,
Nor challenge eye of passer-by
Because in truth I mostly know
The secrets of the heart below.

FINIS[1]

When sun has set behind the hill
And comes the eternal dark to me,
Do thus, out of your charity
And fellowship and dear good will.

First fire the time-worn clay and lime,
Then on the heath the ashes cast,
So that they crumble up at last
Under the fingers of the thyme.

There leave them without more ado
For fair calluna to enfold;

[1] From *Cherry Stones*, by Eden Phillpotts. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

They'll turn one tormentil more gold,
One milkwort stain a deeper blue.

And if you mark that antre lone,
Where hills toward the sunrise turn
On high above a little burn,
Heave up the nearest granite stone.

But see that unwrought rock of mine
Be lifted so that it may bring
Rest for the roving falcon's wing,
And comfort to the wandering kine.

NORMAN GALE

1862

THE DANGER[1]

How soon the prophet stars decree
That you shall fall at last to me
  I know not. This at least I know,
  That many worlds must come and go
Before enchantment brings us both
Together for our long-lost troth.

Often I push my books away,
To search (there's heartbreak in the play)
  A map of star-embroidered sky,
  And finger space where you and I
Shall whisper of an ancient grief,
And kiss it into unbelief.

[1] From *Poems*, by Norman Gale. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

World after world shall I be vexed
To miss you, and shall try the next
  In patient valour. Slowly nears
  Your kiss. And what's a billion years
For me to pay if, when I turn
The golden corner, I discern

(A little pinched by want of mirth)
The face that shook my life on earth?
  Fast shall I run to see if you
  Still wear those eyes of grey in blue.
The danger is, my heart may beat
Too loud, and kill me at your feet.

A CREED[1]

(Abridged)

God sends no message by me. I am mute
  When Wisdom crouches in her farthest cave;
I love the organ, but must touch the lute . . .

No controversies thrust me to the ledge
  Of dangerous schools and doctrines hard to learn;
Give me the whitethroat whistling in the hedge.

Why should I fret myself to find out nought?
  Dispute can blight the soul's eternal corn
And choke its richness with the tares of thought.

I am content to know that God is great,
  And Lord of fish and fowl, of air and sea, —
Some little points are misty. Let them wait.

[1] From *Poems*, by Norman Gale. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

VICTOR PLARR

1863

EPITAPHIUM CITHARISTRIÆ

Stand not uttering sedately
Trite oblivious praise above her!
Rather say you saw her lately
Lightly kissing her last lover.

Whisper not, "There is a reason
Why we bring her no white blossom:"
Since the snowy bloom's in season
Strow it on her sleeping bosom:

Oh, for it would be a pity
To o'erpraise her or to flout her:
She was wild, and sweet, and witty —
Let's not say dull things about her.

CHE SARA SARA!

Preach wisdom unto him who understands!
When there's such lovely longing in thine eyes,
And such a pulse in thy small clinging hands,
What is the good of being great or wise?

What is the good of beating up the dust
On the world's highway, vext with drouthy heat?
Oh, I grow fatalist — what must be must,
Seeing that thou, belovèd, art so sweet!

ROSAMUND MARRIOTT WATSON

1863–19—

REQUIESCAT

Bury me deep when I am dead,
Far from the woods where sweet birds sing;
Lap me in sullen stone and lead,
Lest my poor dust should feel the Spring.

Never a flower be near me set,
Nor starry cup nor slender stem,
Anemone nor violet,
Lest my poor dust remember them.

And you — wherever you may fare —
Dearer than birds, or flowers, or dew —
Never, ah me, pass never there,
Lest my poor dust should dream of you.

ARTHUR T. QUILLER-COUCH

1863

THE SPLENDID SPUR

Not on the neck of prince or hound,
Nor on a woman's finger twined,
May gold from the deriding ground
Keep sacred that we sacred bind:
Only the heel
Of splendid steel

Shall stand secure on sliding fate,
When golden navies weep their freight.

The scarlet hat, the laureled stave
Are measures, not the springs, of worth;
In a wife's lap, as in a grave,
Man's airy notions mix with earth.
Seek other spur
Bravely to stir
The dust in this loud world, and tread
Alp-high among the whispering dead.

Trust in thyself, — then spur amain:
So shall Charybdis wear a grace,
Grim Ætna laugh, the Libyan plain
Take roses to her shriveled face.
This orb — this round
Of sight and sound —
Count it the lists that God hath built
For haughty hearts to ride a-tilt.

SATURN

From my farm, from her farm
Furtively we came. . . .
In either home a hearth was warm:
We nursed a hungrier flame.

Our feet were foul with mire,
Our faces blind with mist;
But all the night was naked fire
About us where we kissed.

To her farm, to my farm,
Loathing we returned;
Pale beneath a gallows arm
The planet Saturn burned.

STEPHEN GWYNN

1864

GLENCAR

Few roads and far to grey Glencar
Where Caragh ripples past,
Yet there, mavrone, shall be your throne
When I win home at last.

On alien soil I bleed and toil:
The soldier sworn of France,
I follow where her bugles blare,
Her eagles glint and glance.

But ships may ride yet on some tide
Leagued to restore our rights,
And I may head the men I've led
In half a hundred fights.

But till that be, astore machree,
For me nor love nor land:
I plant no foot on shamrock-root
Till I come sword in hand.

Few roads and far to grey Glencar
And life a-wasting fast:

Yet there, mavrone, should be your throne,
Could I win home at last.

RUDYARD KIPLING

1865

RECESSIONAL

God of our fathers, known of old —
Lord of our far-flung battle line —
Beneath whose awful hand we hold
Dominion over palm and pine —
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget — lest we forget!

The tumult and the shouting dies —
The Captains and the Kings depart —
Still stands Thine ancient sacrifice,
An humble and a contrite heart.
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget — lest we forget!

Far-called, our navies melt away —
On dune and headland sinks the fire —
Lo, all our pomp of yesterday
Is one with Nineveh and Tyre!
Judge of the Nations, spare us yet,
Lest we forget — lest we forget!

If, drunk with sight of power, we loose
Wild tongues that have not Thee in awe —

Such boasting as the Gentiles use,
Or lesser breeds without the Law —
Lord God of Hosts, be with us yet,
Lest we forget — lest we forget!

For heathen heart that puts her trust
In reeking tube and iron shard —
All-valiant dust that builds on dust,
And guarding calls not Thee to guard —
For frantic boast and foolish word,
Thy Mercy on Thy People, Lord! AMEN.

THE FEET OF THE YOUNG MEN

Now the Four-way Lodge is opened, now the Hunting Winds are loose —
Now the Smokes of Spring go up to clear the brain;
Now the Young Men's hearts are troubled for the whisper of the Trues,
Now the Red Gods make their medicine again!
Who hath seen the beaver busied? Who hath watched the black-tail mating?
Who hath lain alone to hear the wild-goose cry?
Who hath worked the chosen water where the ouananiche is waiting,
Or the sea-trout's jumping-crazy for the fly?

He must go — go — go away from here!
On the other side the world he's overdue.
'Send your road is clear before you when the old
Spring-fret comes o'er you,
And the Red Gods call for you!

So for one the wet sail arching through the rainbow
round the bow
And for one the creak of snow-shoes on the crust;
And for one the lakeside lilies where the bull-moose
waits the cow
And for one the mule-train coughing in the dust.
Who hath smelt wood-smoke at twilight? Who hath
heard the birch-log burning?
Who is quick to read the noises of the night?
Let him follow with the others, for the Young Men's
feet are turning
To the camps of proved desire and known delight!

Let him go — go, etc.

I

Do you know the blackened timber — do you know
that racing stream
With the raw, right-angled log-jam at the end;
And the bar of sun-warmed shingle where a man may
bask and dream
To the click of shod canoe-poles round the bend?
It is there that we are going with our rods and reels and
traces,
To a silent, smoky Indian that we know —
To a couch of new-pulled hemlock, with the starlight
on our faces,
For the Red Gods call us out and we must go!

They must go — go, etc.

II

Do you know the shallow Baltic where the seas are
steep and short,

Where the bluff, lee-boarded fishing-luggers ride?
Do you know the joy of threshing leagues to leeward of your port
On a coast you've lost the chart of overside?
It is there that I am going, with an extra hand to bale her —
Just one able 'long-shore loafer that I know.
He can take his chance of drowning, while I sail and sail and sail her,
For the Red Gods call me out and I must go.

He must go — go, etc.

III

Do you know the pile-built village where the sago-dealers trade —
Do you know the reek of fish and wet bamboo?
Do you know the steaming stillness of the orchid-scented glade
When the blazoned, bird-winged butterflies flap through?
It is there that I am going with my camphor, net, and boxes,
To a gentle, yellow pirate that I know —
To my little wailing lemurs, to my palms and flying-foxes,
For the Red Gods call me out and I must go!

He must go — go, etc.

IV

Do you know the world's white roof-tree — do you know that windy rift
Where the baffling mountain-eddies chop and change?

Do you know the long day's patience, belly-down on frozen drift,
While the head of heads is feeding out of range?
It is there that I am going, where the boulders and the snow lie,
With a trusty, nimble tracker that I know.
I have sworn an oath, to keep it on the Horns of Ovis Poli,
And the Red Gods call me out and I must go.

He must go — go, etc.

Now the Four-way Lodge is opened — now the Smokes of Council rise —
Pleasant smokes, ere yet 'twixt track and trail they choose —
Now the girths and ropes are tested: now they pack their last supplies:
Now our Young Men go to dance before the Trues!
Who shall meet them at those altars — who shall light them to that shrine?
Velvet-footed, who shall guide them to their goal?
Unto each the voice and vision: unto each his spoor and sign —
Lonely mountain in the Northland, misty sweat-bath 'neath the Line —
And to each a man that knows his naked soul!
White or yellow, black or copper, he is waiting, as a lover,
Smoke of funnel, dust of hooves, or beat of train —
Where the high grass hides the horseman or the glaring flats discover —
Where the steamer hails the landing, or the surf-boat brings the rover —

Where the rails run out in sand-drift . . . Quick! ah, heave the camp-kit over,
For the Red Gods make their medicine again!

And we go — go — go away from here!
On the other side the world we're overdue!
'Send the road is clear before you when the old
Spring-fret comes o'er you,
And the Red Gods call for you!

THE BALLAD OF EAST AND WEST

Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain shall meet,
Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judgment Seat;
But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth!

Kamal is out with twenty men to raise the Border side,
And he has lifted the Colonel's mare that is the Colonel's pride.
He has lifted her out of the stable-door between the dawn and the day,
And turned the calkins upon her feet, and ridden her far away.
Then up and spoke the Colonel's son that led a troop of the Guides:
"Is there never a man of all my men can say where Kamal hides?"
Then up and spoke Mohammed Khan, the son of the Ressaldar:

"If ye know the track of the morning-mist, ye know
where his pickets are.
At dusk he harries the Abazai — at dawn he is into
Bonair,
But he must go by Fort Bukloh to his own place to
fare.
So if ye gallop to Fort Bukloh as fast as a bird can fly,
By the favour of God ye may cut him off ere he win
to the Tongue of Jagai.
But if he be past the Tongue of Jagai, right swiftly
turn ye then,
For the length and the breadth of that grisly plain is
sown with Kamal's men.
There is rock to the left, and rock to the right, and
low lean thorn between,
And ye may hear a breech-bolt snick where never a
man is seen."
The Colonel's son has taken a horse, and a raw rough
dun was he,
With the mouth of a bell and the heart of Hell and the
head of a gallows-tree.
The Colonel's son to the Fort has won, they bid him
stay to eat —
Who rides at the tail of a Border thief, he sits not long
at his meat.
He's up and away from Fort Bukloh as fast as he can
fly,
Till he was aware of his father's mare in the gut of the
Tongue of Jagai,
Till he was aware of his father's mare with Kamal
upon her back,
And when he could spy the white of her eye, he made
the pistol crack.

He has fired once, he has fired twice, but the whistling ball went wide.
"Ye shoot like a soldier," Kamal said. "Show now if ye can ride!"
It's up and over the Tongue of Jagai, as blown dust-devils go,
The dun he fled like a stag of ten, but the mare like a barren doe.
The dun he leaned against the bit and slugged his head above,
But the red mare played with the snaffle-bars, as a maiden plays with a glove.
There was rock to the left and rock to the right, and low lean thorn between,
And thrice he heard a breech-bolt snick tho' never a man was seen.
They have ridden the low moon out of the sky, their hoofs drum up the dawn,
The dun he went like a wounded bull, but the mare like a new-roused fawn.
The dun he fell at a water-course — in a woeful heap fell he,
And Kamal has turned the red mare back, and pulled the rider free.
He has knocked the pistol out of his hand — small room was there to strive,
"'Twas only by favour of mine," quoth he, "ye rode so long alive:
There was not a rock for twenty mile, there was not a clump of tree,
But covered a man of my own men with his rifle cocked on his knee.
If I had raised my bridle-hand, as I have held it low,

The little jackals that flee so fast were feasting all in
a row.
If I had bowed my head on my breast, as I have held
it high,
The kite that whistles above us now were gorged till
she could not fly."
Lightly answered the Colonel's son: "Do good to bird
and beast,
But count who come for the broken meats before thou
makest a feast.
If there should follow a thousand swords to carry my
bones away,
Belike the price of a jackal's meal were more than a
thief could pay.
They will feed their horse on the standing crop, their
men on the garnered grain,
The thatch of the byres will serve their fires when all
the cattle are slain.
But if thou thinkest the price be fair, — thy brethren
wait to sup,
The hound is kin to the jackal-spawn, — howl, dog,
and call them up!
And if thou thinkest the price be high, in steer and
gear and stack,
Give me my father's mare again, and I'll fight my own
way back!"
Kamal has gripped him by the hand and set him upon
his feet.
"No talk shall be of dogs," said he, "when wolf and
grey wolf meet.
May I eat dirt if thou hast hurt of me in deed or breath;
What dam of lances brought thee forth to jest at the
dawn with Death?"

Lightly answered the Colonel's son: "I hold by the
blood of my clan:
Take up the mare for my father's gift — by God, she
has carried a man!"
The red mare ran to the Colonel's son, and nuzzled
against his breast;
"We be two strong men," said Kamal then, "but she
loveth the younger best.
So she shall go with a lifter's dower, my turquoise-
studded rein,
My 'broidered saddle and saddle-cloth, and silver
stirrups twain."
The Colonel's son a pistol drew, and held it muzzle-end,
"Ye have taken the one from a foe," said he; "will ye
take the mate from a friend?"
"A gift for a gift," said Kamal straight; "a limb for
the risk of a limb.
Thy father has sent his son to me, I'll send my son to
him!"
With that he whistled his only son, that dropped from
a mountain-crest —
He trod the ling like a buck in spring, and he looked
like a lance in rest.
"Now here is thy master," Kamal said, "who leads a
troop of the Guides,
And thou must ride at his left side as shield on
shoulder rides.
Till Death or I cut loose the tie, at camp and board
and bed,
Thy life is his — thy fate it is to guard him with thy
head.
So thou must eat the White Queen's meat, and all her
foes are thine,

And thou must harry thy father's hold for the peace
of the Border-line.
And thou must make a trooper tough and hack thy
way to power —
Belike they will raise thee to Ressaldar when I am
hanged in Peshawur."

They have looked each other between the eyes, and
there they found no fault,
They have taken the Oath of the Brother-in-Blood on
leavened bread and salt:
They have taken the Oath of the Brother-in-Blood on
fire and fresh-cut sod,
On the hilt and the haft of the Khyber knife and the
Wondrous Names of God.
The Colonel's son he rides the mare and Kamal's boy
the dun,
And two have come back to Fort Bukloh where there
went forth but one.
And when they drew to the Quarter-Guard, full twenty
swords flew clear —
There was not a man but carried his feud with the
blood of the mountaineer.
"Ha' done! ha' done!" said the Colonel's son. "Put
up the steel at your sides!
Last night ye had struck at a Border thief — tonight
'tis a man of the Guides!"

*Oh, East is East, and West is West, and never the twain
shall meet,*
*Till Earth and Sky stand presently at God's great Judg-
ment Seat;*

But there is neither East nor West, Border, nor Breed, nor Birth,
When two strong men stand face to face, though they come from the ends of the earth!

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

1865

THE LAKE ISLE OF INNISFREE[1]

I WILL arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the crickets sing;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wing.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements gray,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

[1] From *Collected Poems*, by William Butler Yeats. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

THE SORROW OF LOVE[1]

THE quarrel of the sparrows in the eaves,
The full round moon and the star-laden sky,
And the loud song of the ever-singing leaves,
Had hid away earth's old and weary cry.

And then you came with those red mournful lips,
And with you came the whole of the world's tears,
And all the trouble of her labouring ships,
And all the trouble of her myriad years.

And now the sparrows warring in the eaves,
The curd-pale moon, the white stars in the sky,
And the loud chaunting of the unquiet leaves,
Are shaken with earth's old and weary cry.

ARTHUR SYMONS

1865

CORNISH WIND

THERE is a wind in Cornwall that I know
From any other wind, because it smells
Of the warm honey breath of heather-bells
And of the sea's salt; and these meet and flow
With such sweet savour in such sharpness met
That the astonished sense in ecstasy
Tastes the ripe earth and the unvintaged sea.

[1] From *Collected Poems*, by William Butler Yeats. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

Wind out of Cornwall, wind, if I forget:
Not in the tunnelled streets where scarce men breathe
The air they live by, but whatever seas
Blossom in foam, wherever merchant bees
Volubly traffic upon any heath:
If I forget, shame me! or if I find
A wind in England like my Cornish wind.

MEMORY

As a perfume doth remain
In the folds where it hath lain,
So the thought of you, remaining
Deeply folded in my brain,
Will not leave me: all things leave me:
You remain.

Other thoughts may come and go,
Other moments I may know
That shall waft me, in their going,
As a breath blown to and fro,
Fragrant memories: fragrant memories
Come and go.

Only thoughts of you remain
In my heart where they have lain,
Perfumed thoughts of you, remaining,
A hid sweetness, in my brain.
Others leave me: all things leave me:
You remain.

CREDO

Each, in himself, his hour to be and cease
Endures alone, but who of men shall dare,
Sole with himself, his single burden bear,
All the long day until the night's release?
Yet ere night falls, and the last shadows close,
This labour of himself is each man's lot;
All he has gained on earth shall be forgot,
Himself he leaves behind him when he goes.
If he has any valiancy within,
If he has made his life his very own,
If he has loved, or laboured, and has known
A strenuous virtue or a strenuous sin;
Then, being dead, his life was not all vain,
For he has saved what most desire to lose,
And he has chosen what the few must choose,
Since life, once lived, shall not return again.
For of our time we lose so large a part
In serious trifles, and so oft let slip
The wine of every moment, at the lip
Its moment, and the moment of the heart.
We are awake so little on the earth,
And we shall sleep so long, and rise so late —
If there is any knocking at that gate
Which is the gate of death, the gate of birth.

HERBERT TRENCH

1865–1923

I HEARD A SOLDIER

I HEARD a soldier sing some trifle
Out in the sun-dried veldt alone:
He lay and cleaned his grimy rifle
Idly, behind a stone.

"If after death, love, comes a waking,
And in their camp so dark and still
The men of dust hear bugles breaking
Their halt upon the hill,

"To me the slow and silver pealing
That then the last high trumpet pours,
Shall softer than the dawn come stealing,
For, with its call, comes yours!"

What grief of love had he to stifle,
Basking so idly by his stone,
That grimy soldier with his rifle
Out in the veldt, alone?

COME, LET US MAKE LOVE DEATHLESS

COME, let us make love deathless, thou and I,
Seeing that our footing on the Earth is brief —
Seeing that her multitudes sweep out to die
Mocking at all that passes their belief.
For standard of our love not theirs we take;
If we go hence to-day

Fill the high cup that is so soon to break
With richer wine than they!

Ay, since beyond these walls no heavens there be
Joy to revive or wasted youth repair,
I'll not bedim the lovely flame in thee
Nor sully the sad splendour that we wear.
Great be the love, if with the lover dies
Our greatness past recall,
And nobler for the fading of those eyes
The world seen once for all!

SHE COMES NOT WHEN NOON IS ON THE ROSES

She comes not when noon is on the roses —
Too bright is Day.
She comes not to the soul till it reposes
From work and play;

But when night is on the hills, and the great voices
Roll in from sea,
By starlight and by candlelight and dreamlight
She comes to me.

LAURENCE HOPE

1865–1904

KASHMIRI SONG

Pale hands I loved beside the Shalimar,
Where are you now? Who lies beneath your spell?
Whom do you lead on Rapture's roadway, far,
Before you agonise them in farewell?

Oh, pale dispensers of my joys and pains,
Holding the doors of Heaven and of Hell,
How the hot blood rushed wildly through the veins
Beneath your touch, until you waved farewell.

Pale hands, pink tipped, like Lotus buds that float
On those cool waters where we used to dwell,
I would have rather felt you round my throat,
Crushing out life, than waving me farewell!

SEA SONG

Against the planks of the cabin side,
(So slight a thing between them and me,)
The great waves thundered and throbbed and sighed,
The great green waves of the Indian sea!

Your face was white as the foam is white,
Your hair was curled as the waves are curled,
I would we had steamed and reached that night
The sea's last edge, the end of the world.

The wind blew in through the open port,
So freshly joyous and salt and free,
Your hair it lifted, your lips it sought,
And then swept back to the open sea.

The engines throbbed with their constant beat;
Your heart was nearer, and all I heard;
Your lips were salt, but I found them sweet,
While, acquiescent, you spoke no word.

So straight you lay in your narrow berth,
Rocked by the waves; and you seemed to be

Essence of all that is sweet on earth,
Of all that is sad and strange at sea.

And you were white as the foam is white,
Your hair was curled as the waves are curled.
Ah! had we but sailed and reached that night
The sea's last edge, the end of the world!

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE

1866

THE CUCKOO

O CUCKOO troubling yonder hill
With call — and call — and call,
I pray you sing a little low,
If you must sing at all.

You ghost-like bird that breaks the peace
Of April with your cry,
Not spring you mean, for when you come
The spring is near to die.

To me you seem a midnight bird,
A voice of death and doom
That in the palace of the spring
Cries from some haunted room.

The vultures tearing at my heart
Bring no such keen a pang,
Bird with the blossom in your voice,
As though the hawthorn sang.

THE CLOISTER

I WOULD be left alone with this great love
That is upon me for eternal things;
Come not between me and this passionate hour —
I would not gather any mortal flower;
I would stay thus all day, nor ever move
Nearer to aught that limitation brings.
I crave no friendly touch of outstretched hands,
Nothing that loves again or understands.
Almost too much of meaning hath this stream,
Too near to music; yea, and yonder birds
Too near to human loving for my dream,
That hath not hands nor feet, nor thoughts, nor words.
I would have nothing nearer me than trees,
Nearer to understanding than the hills,
Nearer to loving than the stars or seas.

NOVEMBER

THIS year, I said, when first along the lane,
With tiny nipples of the tender green
The winter-blackened hedge grew bright again,
This year I watch and listen. I have seen
So many springs steal profitless away,
This year I garner every sound and scent.
And you, young year, make not such haste to bring
Hawthorn and rose, nor jumble, indiscreet,
Treasure on treasure of the precious spring;
But bring all gently forth upon the air,
Unhasting to the fair.

Yet still the spring escaped me, and once more
I stand in the late autumn's sighing door,
While the dishevelled, lone, distracted trees
Lose in bewildered sweeps their yellow leaves;
And the birds sing not, nor is butterfly
Pursued of swallow, nor swallow in the eaves,
Long since flown south to warmer climes than these;
And here is but November left and I:
To wonder if the hawthorn bloomed in May,
And if the wild-rose with so fine a flush
Mantled the cheek of June, and if the way
The stream went singing, foamed with meadow-sweet,
And if the throstle sang in yonder bush,
And if the lark dizzied with song the sky.
I watched and listened, yet so sweet, so fleet,
The mad young year went by.

DORA SIGERSON SHORTER

1866–1918

IRELAND

'Twas the dream of a God
  And the mould of His hand,
That you shook 'neath this stroke,
That you trembled and broke
  To this beautiful land.

Here He loosed from His hold
  A brown tumult of wings,
Till the wind on the sea

Bore the strange melody
Of an island that sings.

He made you all fair,
You in purple and gold,
You in silver and green,
Till no eye that has seen
Without love can behold.

I have left you behind
In the path of the past,
With the white breath of flowers,
With the best of God's hours,
I have left you at last.

THE COMFORTERS

When I crept over the hill, broken with tears,
When I crouched down in the grass, dumb in despair,
I heard the soft croon of the wind bend to my ears,
I felt the light kiss of the wind touching my hair.

When I stood lone on the height, my sorrow did speak,
As I went down the hill, I cried and I cried,
The soft little hands of the rain stroking my cheek,
The kind little feet of the rain ran by my side.

When I went to thy grave, broken with tears,
When I crouched down in the grass, dumb in despair,
I heard the sweet croon of the wind soft in my ears,
I felt the kind lips of the wind touching my hair.

When I stood lone by thy cross, sorrow did speak,
  When I went down the long hill, I cried and I cried,
The soft little hands of the rain stroked my pale cheek,
  The kind little feet of the rain ran by my side.

LAURENCE HOUSMAN

1867

ANNUS MIRABILIS (1902)

Daylight was down, and up the cool
  Bare heaven the moon, o'er roof and elm,
Daughter of dusk most wonderful,
  Went mounting to her realm:
And night was only half begun
Round Edwardes Square in Kensington.

A Sabbath-calm possessed her face,
  An even glow her bosom filled;
High in her solitary place
  The huntress-heart was stilled:
With bow and arrows all laid down
She stood and looked on London town.

Nay, how can sight of us give rest
  To that far-travelled heart, or draw
The musings of that tranquil breast?
  I thought — and gazing, saw
Far up above me, high, oh, high,
From south to north a heron fly!

Oh, swiftly answered! yonder flew
  The wings of freedom and of hope!
Little of London town he knew,
  The far horizon was his scope.
High up he sails, and sees beneath
The glimmering ponds of Hampstead Heath,

Hendon, and farther out afield
  Low water-meads are in his ken,
And lonely pools by Harrow Weald,
  And solitudes unloved of men,
Where he his fisher's spear dips down:
Little he knows of London town.

So small, with all its miles of sin,
  Is London to the grey-winged bird;
A cuckoo called at Lincoln's Inn
  Last April; in Soho was heard
The missel-thrush with throat of glee
And nightingales at Battersea.

LIONEL JOHNSON

1867–1902

TO MORFYDD[1]

A voice on the winds,
A voice by the waters,
  Wanders and cries:

[1] From *Collected Poems*, by Lionel Johnson. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

Oh! what are the winds?
And what are the waters?
Mine are your eyes!

Western the winds are,
And western the waters,
Where the light lies:
Oh! what are the winds?
And what are the waters?
Mine are your eyes!

Cold, cold, grow the winds,
And wild grow the waters,
Where the sun dies:
Oh! what are the winds?
And what are the waters?
Mine are your eyes!

And down the night winds,
And down the night waters,
The music flies:
Oh! what are the winds?
And what are the waters?
Cold be the winds,
And wild be the waters,
So mine be your eyes!

THE PRECEPT OF SILENCE[1]

I KNOW you: solitary griefs,
Desolate passions, aching hours!

[1] From *Collected Poems*, by Lionel Johnson. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

I know you: tremulous beliefs,
Agonized hopes, and ashen flowers!

The winds are sometimes sad to me;
The starry spaces full of fear:
Mine is the sorrow on the sea,
And mine the sigh of places drear.

Some players upon plaintive strings
Publish their wistfulness abroad:
I have not spoken of these things,
Save to one man, and unto God.

THE DARK ANGEL[1]

Dark Angel, with thine aching lust
To rid the world of penitence:
Malicious Angel, who still dost
My soul such subtile violence!

Because of thee, no thought, no thing,
Abides for me undesecrate:
Dark Angel, ever on the wing,
Who never reachest me too late!

When music sounds, then changest thou
Its silvery to a sultry fire:
Nor will thine envious heart allow
Delight untortured by desire.

[1] From *Collected Poems*, by Lionel Johnson. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

Through thee, the gracious Muses turn
To Furies, O mine Enemy!
And all the things of beauty burn
With flames of evil ecstasy.

Because of thee the land of dreams
Becomes a gathering place of fears:
Until tormented slumber seems
One vehemence of useless tears.

When sunlight glows upon the flowers,
Or ripples down the dancing sea:
Thou, with thy troop of passionate powers,
Beleaguerest, bewilderest, me.

Within the breath of autumn woods
Within the winter silences:
Thy venomous spirit stirs and broods,
O Master of impieties!

The ardour of red flame is thine,
And thine the steely soul of ice:
Thou poisonest the fair design
Of nature, with unfair device.

Apples of ashes, golden bright;
Waters of bitterness how sweet!
O banquet of a foul delight,
Prepared by thee, dark Paraclete!

Thou art the whisper in the gloom,
The hinting tone, the haunting laugh:
Thou art the adorner of my tomb,
The minstrel of mine epitaph.

I fight thee, in the Holy Name!
Yet, what thou dost, is what God saith:
Tempter! should I escape thy flame,
Thou wilt have helped my soul from Death:

The second Death, that never dies,
That cannot die, when time is dead:
Live Death, wherein the lost soul cries,
Eternally uncomforted.

Dark Angel, with thine aching lust!
Of two defeats, of two despairs:
Less dread, a change to drifting dust,
Than thine eternity of cares.

Do what thou wilt, thou shalt not so,
Dark Angel! triumph over me:
Lonely, unto the Lone I go;
Divine, to the Divinity.

ERNEST DOWSON

1867–1900

NON SUM QUALIS ERAM BONÆ SUB REGNO CYNARÆ

Last night, ah, yesternight, betwixt her lips and mine
There fell thy shadow, Cynara! thy breath was shed
Upon my soul between the kisses and the wine;
And I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, I was desolate and bowed my head.
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion,

All night upon mine heart I felt her warm heart beat,
Night-long within mine arms in love and sleep she lay;
Surely the kisses of her bought red mouth were sweet;
But I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
When I awoke and found the dawn was gray:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

I have forgot much, Cynara! gone with the wind,
Flung roses, roses riotously with the throng,
Dancing, to put thy pale, lost lilies out of mind;
But I was desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, all the time, because the dance was long:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

I cried for madder music and for stronger wine,
But when the feast is finished and the lamps expire,
Then falls thy shadow, Cynara! the night is thine;
And I am desolate and sick of an old passion,
Yea, hungry for the lips of my desire:
I have been faithful to thee, Cynara! in my fashion.

TO ONE IN BEDLAM

With delicate, mad hands, behind his sordid bars,
Surely he hath his posies, which they tear and twine;
Those scentless wisps of straw that, miserable, line
His strait, caged universe, whereat the dull world stares.

Pedant and pitiful! Oh, how his rapt gaze wars
With their stupidity! Know they what dreams divine
Lift his long, laughing reveries like enchanted wine,
And make his melancholy germane to the stars?

O lamentable brother! if those pity thee,
Am I not fain of all thy lone eyes promise me:
Half a fool's kingdom, far from men who sow and reap,
All their days, vanity? Better than mortal flowers,
Thy moon-kissed roses seem: better than love or sleep,
The star-crowned solitude of thine oblivious hours!

VITÆ SUMMA BREVIS SPEM NOS VETAT INCOHARE LONGAM

They are not long, the weeping and the laughter,
Love and desire and hate;
I think they have no portion in us after
We pass the gate.

They are not long, the days of wine and roses:
Out of a misty dream
Our path emerges for a while, then closes
Within a dream.

A. E.

GEORGE WILLIAM RUSSELL

1867

DUST[1]

I heard them in their sadness say,
"The earth rebukes the thought of God;
We are but embers wrapped in clay
A little nobler than the sod."

[1] From *Collected Poems*, by "A. E." Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

But I have touched the lips of clay,
Mother, thy rudest sod to me
Is thrilled with fire of hidden day,
And haunted by all mystery.

APHRODITE[1]

Not unremembering we pass our exile from the starry ways:
One timeless hour in time we caught from the long night of endless days.
With solemn gayety the stars danced far withdrawn on elfin heights:
The lilac breathed amid the shade of green and blue and citron lights.
But yet the close enfolding night seemed on the phantom verge of things,
For our adoring hearts had turned within from all their wanderings:
For beauty called to beauty, and there thronged at the enchanter's will
The vanished hours of love that burn within the Ever-living still.
And sweet eternal faces put the shadows of the earth to rout,
And faint and fragile as a moth your white hand fluttered and went out.
Oh, who am I who tower beside this goddess of the twilight air?
The burning doves fly from my heart, and melt within her bosom there.

[1] From *Collected Poems*, by "A. E." Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

I know the sacrifice of old they offered to the mighty
queen,
And this adoring love has brought us back the beauty
that has been.
As to her worshippers she came descending from her
glowing skies,
So Aphrodite I have seen with shining eyes look
through your eyes:
One gleam of the ancestral face which lighted up the
dawn for me:
One fiery visitation of the love the gods desire in thee!

THE GREAT BREATH[1]

Its edges foamed with amethyst and rose,
Withers once more the old blue flower of day:
There where the ether like a diamond glows
Its petals fade away.

A shadowy tumult stirs the dusky air;
Sparkle the delicate dews, the distant snows;
The great deep thrills, for through it everywhere
The breath of Beauty blows.

I saw how all the trembling ages past,
Moulded to her by deep and deeper breath,
Neared to the hour when Beauty breathes her last
And knows herself in death.

[1] From *Collected Poems*, by "A. E." Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

RECONCILIATION[1]

I BEGIN through the grass once again to be bound to the Lord;
I can see, through a face that has faded, the face full of rest
Of the earth, of the mother, my heart with her heart in accord,
As I lie 'mid the cool green tresses that mantle her breast;
I begin with the grass once again to be bound to the Lord.

By the hand of a child I am led to the throne of the King,
For a touch that now fevers me not is forgotten and far,
And His infinite sceptred hands that sway us can bring
Me in dreams from the laugh of a child to the song of a star.
On the laugh of a child I am borne to the joy of the King.

[1] From *Collected Poems*, by "A. E." Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

STEPHEN PHILLIPS

1868–1915

A DREAM

My dead love came to me and said:
"God gives me one hour's rest
To spend with thee on earth again;
How shall we spend it best?"

"Why, as of old," I said; and so
We quarrelled as of old;
But, when I turned to make my peace,
That one short hour was told.

I IN THE GREYNESS ROSE

I in the greyness rose;
I could not sleep for thinking of one dead.
Then to the chest I went,
Where lie the things of my beloved spread.

Quickly these I took;
A little glove, a sheet of music torn,
Paintings, ill-done, perhaps;
Then lifted up a dress that she had worn.

And now I came to where
Her letters are; they lie beneath the rest;
And read them in the haze;
She spoke of many things, was sore opprest.

But these things moved me not;
Not when she spoke of being parted quite,

Or being misunderstood,
  Or growing weary of the world's great fight.

Not even when she wrote
  Of our dead child, and the handwriting swerved;
Not even then I shook:
  Not even by such words was I unnerved.

I thought, she is at peace;
  Whither the child is gone, she, too, has passed.
And a much-needed rest
  Is fallen upon her, she is still at last.

But when at length I took
  From under all those letters one small sheet,
Folded and writ in haste;
  Why did my heart with sudden sharpness beat?

Alas! it was not sad!
  Her saddest words I had read calmly o'er.
Alas! it had no pain!
  Her painful words, all these I knew before.

A hurried, happy line!
  A little jest, too slight for one so dead:
This did I not endure:
  Then with a shuddering heart no more I read.

BEAUTIFUL LIE THE DEAD

Beautiful lie the dead;
  Clear comes each feature;
Satisfied not to be,
  Strangely contented.

Like ships, the anchor dropped,
Furled every sail is;
Mirrored with all their masts
In a deep water.

LAURENCE BINYON

1869

WE HAVE PLANTED A TREE [1]

We have planted a tree,
And behold, it has flowers.
How lovely their joy!
Yet they know not of ours,

Who have shared in dull cares
And the sharpness of pain
Yet feel in our kisses
The first kiss again,

And with hand clasped in hand
We turn and we see
The sweet laughing flowers
On our own fair tree.

NOTHING IS ENOUGH [1]

Nothing is enough!
No, though our all be spent —
Heart's extremest love,
Spirit's whole intent,

[1] From *Collected Poems*, by Laurence Binyon. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

All that nerve can feel,
All that brain invent, —
Still beyond appeal
Will Divine Desire
Yet more excellent
Precious cost require
Of this mortal stuff, —
Never be content
Till ourselves be fire.
Nothing is enough!

THINKING OF SHORES [1]

THINKING of shores that I shall never see,
And things that I would know but am forbid
By Time and briefness, treasuries locked from me
In unknown tongue or human bosom hid,

Knowing how unsure is all my knowledge, doled
To sloven memory and to cheated sense,
And to what majesty of stars I hold
My little candle of experience, —

In the vast night, in the untravelled night,
I sigh and seek. And there is answer none,
But in the silence that sure pressure slight
Of your heart beating close beside my own.

O Love, Love, where in you is any bound?
Fool I to seek, who have infinitely found.

[1] From *Collected Poems*, by Laurence Binyon. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

ALFRED DOUGLAS

1870

THE CITY OF THE SOUL

I

What shall we do, my soul, to please the King,
Seeing he hath no pleasure in the dance,
And hath condemned the honeyed utterance
Of silver flutes and mouths made round to sing?
Along the wall red roses climb and cling,
And Oh, my prince, lift up thy countenance,
For there be thoughts like roses that entrance
More than the languors of soft lute-playing.

Think how the hidden things that poets see
In amber eves or mornings crystalline,
Hide in the soul their constant quenchless light,
Till, called by some celestial alchemy,
Out of forgotten depths, they rise and shine
Like buried treasure on Midsummer night.

II

The fields of Phantasy are all too wide,
My soul runs through them like an untamed thing.
It leaps the brooks like threads, and skirts the ring
Where fairies danced, and tenderer flowers hide.
The voice of music has become the bride
Of an imprisoned bird with broken wing.
What shall we do, my soul, to please the King,
We that are free, with ample wings untied?

We cannot wander through the empty fields
Till beauty like a hunter hurl the lance.
There are no silver snares and springes set,
Nor any meadow where the plain ground yields.
O let us then with ordered utterance
Forge the gold chain and twine the silken net.

III

Each new hour's passage is the acolyte
Of inarticulate song and syllable,
And every passing moment is a bell
To mourn the death of undiscerned delight.
Where is the sun that made the noonday bright,
And where the midnight moon? O let us tell,
In long carved line and painted parable,
How the white road curves down into the night.

Only to build one crystal barrier
Against this sea which beats upon our days;
To ransom one lost moment with a rhyme!
Or if fate cries and grudging gods demur,
To clutch Life's hair, and thrust one naked phrase
Like a lean knife between the ribs of Time.

WILLIAM H. DAVIES

1870

LEISURE

What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

No time to stand beneath the boughs
And stare as long as sheep or cows.

No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.

No time to see, in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like stars at night.

No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they can dance.

No time to wait till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began.

A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

NATURE'S FRIEND

Say what you like,
All things love me!
I pick no flowers —
That wins the Bee.

The summer's Moths
Think my hand one —
To touch their wings —
With Wind and Sun.

The garden Mouse
Comes near to play;
Indeed, he turns
His eyes away.

The Wren knows well
I rob no nest;
When I look in,
She still will rest.

The hedge stops Cows,
Or they would come
After my voice
Right to my home.

The Horse can tell,
Straight from my lip,
My hand could not
Hold any whip.

Say what you like,
All things love me!
Horse, Cow, and Mouse,
Bird, Moth and Bee.

A GREAT TIME

Sweet Chance, that led my steps abroad,
Beyond the town, where wild flowers grow —
A rainbow and a cuckoo, Lord,
How rich and great the times are now!
Know, all ye sheep
And cows, that keep
On staring that I stand so long
In grass that's wet from heavy rain —
A rainbow and a cuckoo's song
May never come together again;
May never come
This side the tomb.

THE SLEEPERS

As I walked down the waterside
  This silent morning, wet and dark;
Before the cocks in farmyards crowed,
  Before the dogs began to bark;
Before the hour of five was struck
By old Westminster's mighty clock:

As I walked down the waterside
  This morning, in the cold damp air,
I saw a hundred women and men
  Huddled in rags and sleeping there:
These people have no work, thought I,
And long before their time they die.

That moment, on the waterside,
  A lighted car came at a bound;
I looked inside, and saw a score
  Of pale and weary men that frowned;
Each man sat in a huddled heap,
Carried to work while fast asleep.

Ten cars rushed down the waterside,
  Like lighted coffins in the dark;
With twenty dead men in each car,
  That must be brought alive by work:
These people work too hard, thought I,
And long before their time they die.

T. STURGE MOORE

1870

THE HOME OF HELEN

Lacedaemon, hast thou seen it?
Lacedaemon, Lacedaemon!
Round Taÿgetus the forests
Leaguer snow-capped crags above them.
Lacedaemon rich in corn-lands,
With the grand hill-shoulders round them
Blue as lapis in the twilight,
Striking early every morning
Through the mist till when the azure
Drops a veil of lucent sapphire
O'er our mountains in the noon-tide —
Our old ramparts, walls of safety!

And Eurotas — hast thou heard him,
Heard Eurotas, old Eurotas,
Gurgle, growl and gnaw the boulders?
Hast thou heard Eurotas laughing?
Hast thou stemmed his solemn current,
Where the dark rose-laurels shade it,
In the cool cliff-sheltered places,
Where the women bathe, while gravely
Swans sail in and out among them?
— Swimming women, in pure water
Passing 'neath swans proud and passive,
Where Zeus saw and loved white Leda?

HILAIRE BELLOC

1870

COURTESY

Of Courtesy, it is much less
Than Courage of Heart or Holiness,
Yet in my Walks it seems to me
That the Grace of God is in Courtesy.

On Monks I did in Storrington fall,
They took me straight into their Hall;
I saw Three Pictures on a wall,
And Courtesy was in them all.

The first the Annunciation;
The second the Visitation;
The third the Consolation,
Of God that was Our Lady's Son.

The first was of Saint Gabriel;
On Wings a-flame from Heaven he fell;
And as he went upon one knee
He shone with Heavenly Courtesy.

Our Lady out of Nazareth rode —
It was Her month of heavy load;
Yet was Her face both great and kind,
For Courtesy was in Her Mind.

The third it was our Little Lord,
Whom all the Kings in arms adored;
He was so small you could not see
His large intent of Courtesy.

Our Lord, that was Our Lady's Son,
Go bless you, people, one by one;
My Rhyme is written, my work is done.

THE SOUTH COUNTRY

When I am living in the Midlands
That are sodden and unkind,
I light my lamp in the evening:
My work is left behind;
And the great hills of the South Country
Come back into my mind.

The great hills of the South Country
They stand along the sea;
And it's there walking in the high woods
That I could wish to be,
And the men that were boys when I was a boy
Walking along with me.

The men that live in North England
I saw them for a day:
Their hearts are set upon the waste fells,
Their skies are fast and grey;
From their castle-walls a man may see
The mountains far away.

The men that live in West England
They see the Severn strong,
A-rolling on rough water brown
Light aspen leaves along.
They have the secret of the Rocks,
And the oldest kind of song.

But the men that live in the South Country
Are the kindest and most wise,
They get their laughter from the loud surf,
And the faith in their happy eyes
Comes surely from our Sister the Spring
When over the sea she flies;
The violets suddenly bloom at her feet,
She blesses us with surprise.

I never get between the pines
But I smell the Sussex air;
Nor I never come on a belt of sand
But my home is there.
And along the sky the line of the Downs
So noble and so bare.

A lost thing could I never find,
Nor a broken thing mend:
And I fear I shall be all alone
When I get towards the end.
Who will there be to comfort me
Or who will be my friend?

I will gather and carefully make my friends
Of the men of the Sussex Weald,
They watch the stars from silent folds,
They stiffly plough the field.
By them and the God of the South Country
My poor soul shall be healed.

If I ever become a rich man,
Or if ever I grow to be old,

I will build a house with deep thatch
To shelter me from the cold,
And there shall the Sussex songs be sung
And the story of Sussex told.

I will hold my house in the high wood
Within a walk of the sea,
And the men that were boys when I was a boy
Shall sit and drink with me.

NORA HOPPER

1871

A CONNAUGHT LAMENT

I WILL arise and go hence to the west,
And dig me a grave where the hill-winds call;
But O were I dead, were I dust, the fall
Of my own love's footstep would break my rest!

My heart in my bosom is black as a sloe!
I heed not cuckoo nor wren nor swallow;
Like a flying leaf in the sky's blue hollow,
The heart in my breast is, that beats so low.

Because of the words that your lips have spoken,
(O dear black head that I must not follow)
My heart is a grave that is stripped and hollow,
As ice on the water my heart is broken.

O lips forgetful and kindness fickle,
The swallow goes South with you, I go west,

Where fields are empty and scythes at rest.
I am the poppy and you the sickle,
My heart is broken within my breast.

EVA GORE-BOOTH

1872

THE LITTLE WAVES OF BREFFNY

THE grand road from the mountain goes shining to the sea
And there is traffic on it, and many a horse and cart,
But the little roads of Cloonagh are dearer far to me
And the little roads of Cloonagh go rambling through my heart.

A great storm from the ocean goes shouting o'er the hill,
And there is glory in it and terror on the wind,
But the haunted air of twilight is very strange and still
And the little winds of twilight are dearer to my mind.

The great waves of the Atlantic sweep storming on their way,
Shining green and silver with the hidden herring shoal,
But the little waves of Breffny have drenched my heart in spray
And the little waves of Breffny go stumbling through my soul.

MOIRA O'NEILL

CORRYMEELA[1]

Over here in England I'm helpin' wi' the hay,
An' I wisht I was in Ireland the livelong day;
Weary on the English hay, an' sorra take the wheat!
Och! Corrymeela, an' the blue sky over it.

There's a deep dumb river flowin' by beyont the heavy trees,
This livin' air is moithered wi' the bummin' o' the bees;
I wisht I'd hear the Claddagh burn go runnin' through the heat
Past Corrymeela, wi' the blue sky over it.

The people that's in England is richer nor the Jews,
There' not the smallest young gossoon but thravels in his shoes!
I'd give the pipe between me teeth to see a barefut child,
Och! Corrymeela, an' the low south wind.

Here's hands so full o' money an' hearts so full o' care,
By the luck o' love I'd still go light for all I did go bare.
"God save ye, *colleen dhas*," I said: the girl she thought me wild.
Far Corrymeela, an' the low south wind.

[1] From *Songs and More Songs from the Glens of Antrim*, by Moira O'Neill. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

D'ye mind me now, the song at night is mortial hard
to raise,
The girls are heavy goin' here, the boys are ill to
plase;
When one'st I'm out this workin' hive, 'tis I'll be back
again —
Ay, Corrymeela, in the same soft rain.

The puff o' smoke from one ould roof before an Eng-
lish town!
For a *shaugh* wid Andy Feelan here I'd give a silver
crown,
For a curl o' hair like Mollie's ye'll ask the like in vain,
Sweet Corrymeela, an' the same soft rain.

A SONG OF GLENNAN[1]

Och, when we lived in ould Glennan
Meself could lift a song!
And ne'er an hour by day or dark
Would I be thinkin' long.

The weary wind might take the roof,
The rain might lay the corn;
We'd up an' look for betther luck
About the morrow's morn.

But since we come away from there
An' far across the say,
I still have wrought, an' still have thought
The way I'm doin' the day.

[1] From *Songs and More Songs from the Glens of Antrim*, by Moira O'Neill. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

An' now we're quarely betther fixed,
In troth! there' nothin' wrong;
But me an' mine, by rain an' shine,
We do be thinkin' long.

FORD MADOX HUEFFER

1873

FOOTSLOGGERS

TO C. F. G. M.

I

What is love of one's land? . . . .
I don't know very well.
It is something that sleeps
For a year, for a day,
For a month — something that keeps
Very hidden and quiet and still,
And then takes
The quiet heart like a wave,
The quiet brain like a spell,
The quiet will
Like a tornado; and that shakes
The whole of the soul.

II

It is omnipotent like love;
It is deep and quiet as the grave,
And it awakes
Like a flame, like a madness,
Like the great passion of your life.

The cold keenness of a tempered knife,
The great gladness of a wedding day,
The austerity of monks who wake to pray
In the dim light,
Who pray
In the darkling grove:
All these and a great belief in what we deem the right
Creeping upon us like the overwhelming sand
Driven by a December gale,—
Make up the love of one's land.

. . . . . .

L'ENVOI

What is love of one's land?
Ah, we know very well
It is something that sleeps for a year, for a day,
For a month; something that keeps
Very hidden and quiet and still,
And then takes
The quiet heart like a wave,
The quiet brain like a spell,
The quiet will
Like a tornado, and that shakes
The whole being and soul . . .
Aye, the whole of the soul.

WALTER DE LA MARE

1873

THE LISTENERS

"Is there anybody there?" said the Traveller,
  Knocking on the moonlit door;
And his horse in the silence champed the grasses
  Of the forest's ferny floor:
And a bird flew up out of the turret,
  Above the Traveller's head:
And he smote upon the door again a second time;
  "Is there anybody there?" he said.
But no one descended to the Traveller;
  No head from the leaf-fringed sill
Leaned over and looked into his grey eyes,
  Where he stood perplexed and still.
But only a host of phantom listeners
  That dwelt in the lone house then
Stood listening in the quiet of the moonlight
  To that voice from the world of men:
Stood thronging the faint moonbeams on the dark
      stair,
  That goes down to the empty hall,
Hearkening in an air stirred and shaken
  By the lonely Traveller's call.
And he felt in his heart their strangeness,
  Their stillness answering his cry,
While his horse moved, cropping the dark turf,
  'Neath the starred and leafy sky;
For he suddenly smote on the door, even
  Louder, and lifted his head: —
"Tell them I came, and no one answered,

That I kept my word," he said.
Never the least stir made the listeners,
Though every word he spake
Fell echoing through the shadowiness of the still house
From the one man left awake:
Ay, they heard his foot upon the stirrup,
And the sound of iron on stone,
And how the silence surged softly backward,
When the plunging hoofs were gone.

THE LITTLE SALAMANDER

When I go free,
I think 'twill be
A night of stars and snow,
And the wild fires of frost shall light
My footsteps as I go;
Nobody — nobody will be there
With groping touch, or sight,
To see me in my bush of hair
Dance burning through the night.

THE SONG OF THE MAD PRINCE

Who said, "Peacock Pie"?
The old King to the sparrow:
Who said, "Crops are ripe"?
Rust to the harrow:
Who said, "Where sleeps she now?
Where rests she now her head,
Bathed in eve's loveliness"?
That's what I said.

Who said, "Ay, mum's the word"?
Sexton to willow:
Who said, "Green dusk for dreams.
Moss for a pillow"?
Who said, "All Time's delight
Hath she for narrow bed;
Life's troubled bubble broken"?
That's what I said.

AN EPITAPH

Here lies a most beautiful lady,
Light of step and heart was she;
I think she was the most beautiful lady
That ever was in the West Country.
But beauty vanishes; beauty passes;
However rare — rare it be;
And when I crumble, who will remember
This lady of the West Country?

GILBERT KEITH CHESTERTON

1874

ELEGY IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

The men that worked for England
They have their graves at home;
And bees and birds of England
About the cross can roam.

But they that fought for England,
Following a falling star,

Alas, alas, for England
They have their graves afar.

And they that rule in England
In stately conclave met,
Alas, alas, for England
They have no graves as yet.

THE SWORD OF SURPRISE

SUNDER me from my bones, O sword of God,
Till they stand stark and strange as do the trees;
That I whose heart goes up with the soaring woods
May marvel as much at these.

Sunder me from my blood that in the dark
I hear that red ancestral river run,
Like branching buried floods that find the sea
But never find the sun.

Give me miraculous eyes to see my eyes,
Those rolling mirrors made alive in me,
Terrible crystal more incredible
Than all the things they see.

Sunder me from my soul, that I may see
The sins like streaming wounds, the life's brave beat
Till I shall save myself, as I would save
A stranger in the street.

LEPANTO

WHITE founts falling in the Courts of the sun,
And the Soldan of Byzantium is smiling as they run;

There is laughter like the fountains in that face of all men feared,
It stirs the forest darkness, the darkness of his beard,
It curls the blood-red crescent, the crescent of his lips,
For the inmost sea of all the earth is shaken with his ships.
They have dared the white republics up the capes of Italy,
They have dashed the Adriatic round the Lion of the Sea,
And the Pope has cast his arms abroad for agony and loss,
And called the kings of Christendom for swords about the Cross.
The cold queen of England is looking in the glass;
The shadow of the Valois is yawning at the Mass;
From evening isles fantastical rings faint the Spanish gun,
And the Lord upon the Golden Horn is laughing in the sun.

Dim drums throbbing, in the hills half heard,
Where only on a nameless throne a crownless prince has stirred,
Where, risen from a doubtful seat and half attainted stall,
The last Knight of Europe takes weapons from the wall,
The last and lingering troubadour to whom the bird has sung,
That once went singing southward when all the world was young.
In that enormous silence, tiny and unafraid,

Comes up along a winding road the noise of the Crusade.
Strong gongs groaning as the guns boom far,
Don John of Austria is going to the war,
Stiff flags straining in the night-blasts cold
In the gloom black-purple, in the glint old-gold,
Torchlight crimson on the copper kettle-drums,
Then the tuckets, then the trumpets, then the cannon, and he comes.
Don John laughing in the brave beard curled,
Spurning of his stirrups like the thrones of all the world,
Holding his head up for a flag of all the free.
Love-light of Spain — hurrah!
Death-light of Africa!
Don John of Austria
Is riding to the sea.

Mahound is in his paradise above the evening star,
(*Don John of Austria is going to the war.*)
He moves a mighty turban on the timeless houri's knees,
His turban that is woven of the sunsets and the seas.
He shakes the peacock gardens as he rises from his ease,
And he strides among the tree-tops and is taller than the trees,
And his voice through all the garden is a thunder sent to bring
Black Azrael and Ariel and Ammon on the wing.
Giants and the Genii,
Multiplex of wing and eye,
Whose strong obedience broke the sky
When Solomon was king.

They rush in red and purple from the red clouds of the morn,
From temples where the yellow gods shut up their eyes in scorn;
They rise in green robes roaring from the green hells of the sea
Where fallen skies and evil hues and eyeless creatures be;
On them the sea-valves cluster and the grey sea-forests curl,
Splashed with a splendid sickness, the sickness of the pearl;
They swell in sapphire smoke out of the blue cracks of the ground, —
They gather and they wonder and give worship to Mahound.
And he saith, "Break up the mountains where the hermit-folk can hide,
And sift the red and silver sands lest bone of saint abide,
And chase the Giaours flying night and day, not giving rest,
For that which was our trouble comes again out of the west.
We have set the seal of Solomon on all things under sun,
Of knowledge and of sorrow and endurance of things done,
But a noise is in the mountains, in the mountains, and I know
The voice that shook our palaces — four hundred years ago:
It is he that saith not 'Kismet'; it is he that knows not Fate;

It is Richard, it is Raymond, it is Godfrey at the gate!
It is he whose loss is laughter when he counts the wager worth,
Put down your feet upon him, that our peace be on the earth."
For he heard drums groaning and he heard guns jar,
(*Don John of Austria is going to the war.*)
Sudden and still — hurrah!
Bolt from Iberia!
Don John of Austria
Is gone by Alcalar.

St. Michael's on his Mountain in the sea-roads of the north
(*Don John of Austria is girt and going forth.*)
Where the grey seas glitter and the sharp tides shift
And the sea-folk labour and the red sails lift.
He shakes his lance of iron and he claps his wings of stone;
The noise is gone through Normandy; the noise is gone alone;
The North is full of tangled things and texts and aching eyes
And dead is all the innocence of anger and surprise,
And Christian killeth Christian in a narrow dusty room,
And Christian dreadeth Christ that hath a newer face of doom,
And Christian hateth Mary that God kissed in Galilee,
But Don John of Austria is riding to the sea.
Don John calling through the blast and the eclipse
Crying with the trumpet, with the trumpet of his lips,

Trumpet that sayeth *ha!*
Domino gloria!
Don John of Austria
Is shouting to the ships.

King Philip's in his closet with the Fleece about his neck
(*Don John of Austria is armed upon the deck.*)
The walls are hung with velvet that is black and soft as sin,
And little dwarfs creep out of it and little dwarfs creep in.
He holds a crystal phial that has colours like the moon,
He touches, and it tingles, and he trembles very soon,
And his face is as a fungus of a leprous white and grey
Like plants in the high houses that are shuttered from the day,
And death is in the phial and the end of noble work,
But Don John of Austria has fired upon the Turk.
Don John's hunting, and his hounds have bayed —
Booms away past Italy the rumour of his raid.
Gun upon gun, ha! ha!
Gun upon gun, hurrah!
Don John of Austria
Has loosed the cannonade.

The Pope was in his chapel before day or battle broke,
(*Don John of Austria is hidden in the smoke.*)
The hidden room in man's house where God sits all the year,
The secret window whence the world looks small and very dear.
He sees as in a mirror on the monstrous twilight sea

The crescent of his cruel ships whose name is mystery;
They fling great shadows foe-wards, making Cross and
Castle dark,
They veil the plumèd lions on the galleys of St. Mark;
And above the ships are palaces of brown, black-
bearded chiefs,
And below the ships are prisons where, with multi-
tudinous griefs,
Christian captives sick and sunless, all a labouring race
repines
Like a race in sunken cities, like a nation in the mines.
They are lost like slaves that swat, and in the skies of
morning hung
The stairways of the tallest gods when tyranny was
young.
They are countless, voiceless, hopeless as those fallen
or fleeing on
Before the high Kings' horses in the granite of Baby-
lon.
And many a one grows witless in his quiet room in
hell
Where a yellow face looks inward through the lattice
of his cell,
And he finds his God forgotten, and he seeks no more
a sign —
(*But Don John of Austria has burst the battle line!*)
Don John pounding from the slaughter-painted poop,
Purpling all the ocean like a bloody pirate's sloop,
Scarlet running over on the silvers and the golds,
Breaking of the hatches up and bursting of the holds,
Thronging of the thousands up that labour under sea
White for bliss and blind for sun and stunned for
liberty.

Vivat Hispania!
Domino Gloria!
Don John of Austria
Has set his people free!

Cervantes on his galley sets the sword back in the sheath
(*Don John of Austria rides homeward with a wreath.*)
And he sees across a weary land a straggling road in Spain,
Up which a lean and foolish knight forever rides in vain,
And he smiles, but not as Sultans smile, and settles back the blade . . .
(*But Don John of Austria rides home from the Crusade.*)

GORDON BOTTOMLEY

1874

NEW YEAR'S EVE, 1913

O Cartmel bells ring soft tonight,
And Cartmel bells ring clear,
But I lie far away tonight
Listening with my dear;

Listening in a frosty land
Where all the bells are still
And the small-windowed bell-towers stand
Dark under heath and hill.

I thought that, with each dying year,
As long as life should last,
The bells of Cartmel I should hear
Ring out an aged past.

The plunging, mingling sounds increase
Darkness's depth and height,
The hollow valley gains more peace
And ancientness tonight:

The loveliness, the fruitfulness,
The power of life lived there
Return, revive, more closely press
Upon that midnight air.

But many deaths have place in men
Before they come to die;
Joys must be used and spent, and then
Abandoned and passed by.

Earth is not ours; no cherished space
Can hold us from life's flow,
That bears us thither and thence by ways
We knew not we should go.

O Cartmel bells ring loud, ring clear,
Through midnight deep and hoar,
A year new-born, and I shall hear
The Cartmel bells no more.

ELEGIAC MOOD

From song and dream forever gone
Are Helen, Helen of Troy,

And Cleopatra made to look upon,
And many a daring boy —
Young Faust and Sigurd and Hippolytus:
They are twice dead and we must find
Great ladies yet unblemished by the mind,
Heroes and acts not cold for us
In amber or spirits of too many words.
Ay, these are murdered by much thinking on.
I hanker even for new shapes of swords,
More different sins, and raptures not yet done.
Yet, as I wait on marvels, such a bird
As maybe Sigurd heard —
A thrush — alighting with a little run
Out-tops the daisies as it passes
And peeps bright-eyed above the grasses.

FRANCES CORNFORD

1874

TO A LADY SEEN FROM THE TRAIN

O WHY do you walk through the fields in gloves,
  Missing so much and so much?
O fat white woman whom nobody loves,
Why do you walk through the fields in gloves,
When the grass is soft as the breast of doves
  And shivering-sweet to the touch?
O why do you walk through the fields in gloves,
  Missing so much and so much?

JOHN MASEFIELD

1878

SEA–FEVER [1]

I MUST go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by,
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,
And a grey mist on the sea's face and a grey dawn breaking.

I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea-gulls crying.

I must go down to the seas again, to the vagrant gypsy life,
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the wind's like a whetted knife;
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-rover,
And a quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over.

[1] From *Collected Poems*, by John Masefield. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

ON GROWING OLD[1]

Be with me, Beauty, for the fire is dying,
My dog and I are old, too old for roving,
Man, whose young passion sets the spindrift flying,
Is soon too lame to march, too cold for loving.

I take the book and gather to the fire,
Turning old yellow leaves; minute by minute
The clock ticks to my heart; a withered wire
Moves a thin ghost of music in the spinnet.

I cannot sail your seas, I cannot wander
Your cornland, nor your hill-land nor your valleys,
Ever again, nor share the battle yonder
Where the young knight the broken squadron rallies.

Only stay quiet while my mind remembers
The beauty of fire from the beauty of embers.

WILFRID WILSON GIBSON

1878

PROEM[2]

As one, at midnight, wakened by the call
Of golden-plovers in their seaward flight,
Who lies and listens, as the clear notes fall
Through tingling quiet of the frosty night —

[1] From *Collected Poems*, by John Masefield. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

[2] From *Collected Poems*, by Wilfrid Wilson Gibson. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

Who lies and listens, till the wild notes fail;
And then, in fancy, following the flock
Fares over slumbering hill and dreaming dale,
Until he hears the surf on reef and rock
Break, thundering; and all sense of self is drowned
Within the mightier music of the deep,
And he no more recalls the piping sound
That startled him from dull, undreaming sleep:
So I, first waking from oblivion, heard,
With heart that kindled to the call of song,
The voice of young life, fluting like a bird,
And echoed that wild piping; till, ere long,
Lured onward by that happy, singing-flight,
I caught the stormy summons of the sea,
And dared the restless deeps that, day and night,
Surge with the life-song of humanity.

THE STONE[1]

"And will you cut a stone for him,
To set above his head?
And will you cut a stone for him —
A stone for him?" she said.

Three days before, a splintered rock
Had struck her lover dead —
Had struck him in the quarry dead,
Where, careless of the warning call,
He loitered, while the shot was fired —
A lively stripling, brave and tall,
And sure of all his heart desired . . .

[1] From *Collected Poems*, by Wilfrid Wilson Gibson. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

A flash, a shock,
A rumbling fall . . .
And, broken 'neath the broken rock,
A lifeless heap, with face of clay,
And still as any stone he lay,
With eyes that saw the end of all.

I went to break the news to her:
And I could hear my own heart beat
With dread of what my lips might say;
But some poor fool had sped before;
And flinging wide her father's door,
Had blurted out the news to her,
Had struck her lover dead for her,
Had struck the girl's heart dead in her,
Had struck life, lifeless, at a word,
And dropped it at her feet:
Then hurried on his witless way,
Scarce knowing she had heard.

And when I came, she stood alone —
A woman, turned to stone:
And though no word at all she said,
I knew that all was known.

Because her heart was dead,
She did not sigh nor moan.
Her mother wept:
She could not weep.
Her lover slept:
She could not sleep.
Three days, three nights,
She did not stir:

Three days, three nights
Were one to her,
Who never closed her eyes
From sunset to sunrise,
From dawn to evenfall —
Her tearless, staring eyes,
That seeing naught, saw all.

The fourth night when I came from work,
I found her at my door.
"And will you cut a stone for him?"
She said: and spoke no more:
But followed me, as I went in,
And sank upon a chair;
And fixed her grey eyes on my face
With still, unseeing stare.
And, as she waited patiently,
I could not bear to feel
Those still, grey eyes that followed me,
Those eyes that plucked the heart from me,
Those eyes that sucked the breath from me
And curdled the warm blood in me,
Those eyes that cut me to the bone,
And pierced my marrow like cold steel.

And so I rose, and sought a stone,
And cut it, smooth and square:
And, as I worked, she sat and watched,
Beside me, in her chair.
Night after night, by candlelight,
I cut her lover's name:
Night after night, so still and white,
And like a ghost she came;

And sat beside me, in her chair,
And watched with eyes aflame.

She eyed each stroke,
And hardly stirred:
She never spoke
A single word:
And not a sound or murmur broke
The quiet, save the mallet-stroke.

With still eyes ever on my hands,
With eyes that seemed to burn my hands,
My wincing, overwearied hands,
She watched, with bloodless lips apart,
And silent, indrawn breath:
And every stroke my chisel cut,
Death cut still deeper in her heart:
The two of us were chiselling,
Together, I and death.

And when at length the job was done,
And I had laid the mallet by,
As if, at last, her peace were won,
She breathed his name; and, with a sigh,
Passed slowly through the open door:
And never crossed my threshold more.

Next night I laboured late, alone,
To cut her name upon the stone.

RUPERT BROOKE[1]

Once in my garret — you being far away
Tramping the hills and breathing upland air,
Or so I fancied — brooding in my chair,
I watched the London sunshine feeble and grey
Dapple my desk, too tired to labour more,
When, looking up, I saw you standing there
Although I'd caught no footstep on the stair,
Like sudden April at my open door.

Though now beyond earth's farthest hills you fare,
Song-crowned, immortal, sometimes it seems to me
That, if I listen very quietly,
Perhaps I'll hear a light foot on the stair
And see you standing with your angel air,
Fresh from the uplands of eternity.

BACK[1]

They ask me where I've been,
And what I've done and seen.
But what can I reply
Who know it wasn't I,
But someone just like me,
Who went across the sea
And with my head and hands
Killed men in foreign lands . . .
But I must bear the blame
Because he bore my name.

[1] From *Collected Poems*, by Wilfrid Wilson Gibson. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

RALPH HODGSON

1878

TIME, YOU OLD GIPSY MAN[1]

Time, you old gipsy man,
Will you not stay,
Put up your caravan
Just for one day?

All things I'll give you
Will you be my guest,
Bells for your gennet
Of silver the best,
Goldsmiths shall beat you
A great golden ring,
Peacocks shall bow to you,
Little boys sing,
Oh, and sweet girls will
Festoon you with may,
Time, you old gipsy,
Why hasten away?

Last week in Babylon,
Last night in Rome,
Morning, and in the crush
Under Paul's dome;
Under Paul's dial
You tighten your rein —
Only a moment,
And off once again;

[1] From *Poems*, by Ralph Hodgson. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

Off to some city
Now blind in the womb,
Off to another
Ere that's in the tomb.

Time, you old gipsy man,
Will you not stay,
Put up your caravan
Just for one day?

EVE[1]

Eve, with her basket, was
Deep in the bells and grass,
Wading in bells and grass
Up to her knees,
Picking a dish of sweet
Berries and plums to eat,
Down in the bells and grass
Under the trees.

Mute as a mouse in a
Corner the cobra lay,
Curled round a bough of the
Cinnamon tall . . .
Now to get even and
Humble proud heaven and
Now was the moment or
Never at all.

"Eva!" Each syllable
Light as a flower fell,

[1] From *Poems*, by Ralph Hodgson. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

"Eva!" he whispered the
Wondering maid,
Soft as a bubble sung
Out of a linnet's lung,
Soft and most silverly
"Eva!" he said.

Picture that orchard sprite,
Eve, with her body white,
Supple and smooth to her
Slim finger tips,
Wondering, listening,
Listening, wondering,
Eve with a berry
Half-way to her lips.

Oh, had our simple Eve
Seen through the make-believe!
Had she but known the
Pretender he was!
Out of the boughs he came,
Whispering still her name,
Tumbling in twenty rings
Into the grass.

Here was the strangest pair
In the world anywhere,
Eve in the bells and grass
Kneeling, and he
Telling his story low . . .
Singing birds saw them go
Down the dark path to
The Blasphemous Tree.

Oh, what a clatter when
Titmouse and Jenny Wren
Saw him successful and
Taking his leave!
How the birds rated him,
How they all hated him!
How they all pitied
Poor motherless Eve!

Picture her crying
Outside in the lane,
Eve, with no dish of sweet
Berries and plums to eat,
Haunting the gate of the
Orchard in vain. . . .
Picture the lewd delight
Under the hill to-night —
"Eva!" the toast goes round,
"Eva!" again.

THE SWALLOW[1]

The morning that my baby came
They found a baby swallow dead,
And saw a something, hard to name,
Flit moth-like over baby's bed.

My joy, my flower, my baby dear
Sleeps on my bosom well, but Oh!
If in the Autumn of the year
When swallows gather round and go —

[1] From *Poems*, by Ralph Hodgson. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

THOMAS MACDONAGH

1878–1916

JOHN-JOHN

I DREAMT last night of you, John-John,
And thought you called to me;
And when I woke this morning, John,
Yourself I hoped to see;
But I was all alone, John-John,
Though still I heard your call;
I put my boots and bonnet on,
And took my Sunday shawl,
And went, full sure to find you, John,
At Nenagh fair.

The fair was just the same as then,
Five years ago to-day,
When first you left the thimble men
And came with me away;
For there again were thimble men
And shooting galleries,
And card trick men and Maggie-men
Of all sorts and degrees;
But not a sight of you, John-John,
Was anywhere.

I turned my face to home again,
And called myself a fool
To think you'd leave the thimble men
And live again by rule,
And go to mass and keep the fast
And till the little patch;

My wish to have you home was past
Before I raised the latch
And pushed the door and saw you, John,
Sitting down there.

How cool you came in here, begad,
As if you owned the place!
But rest yourself there now, my lad,
'Tis good to see your face;
My dream is out, and now by it
I think I know my mind:
At six o'clock this house you'll quit,
And leave no grief behind; —
But until six o'clock, John-John,
My bit you'll share.

The neighbors' shame of me began
When first I brought you in;
To wed and keep a tinker man
They thought a kind of sin;
But now this three year since you're gone
'Tis pity me they do,
And that I'd rather have, John-John,
Than that they'd pity you,
Pity for me and you, John-John,
I could not bear.

Oh, you're my husband right enough,
But what's the good of that?
You know you never were the stuff
To be the cottage cat,
To watch the fire and hear me lock
The door and put out Shep —

But there, now, it is six o'clock
And time for you to step.
God bless and keep you far, John-John!
And that's my prayer.

WISHES FOR MY SON

(*Born on St. Cecilia's Day, 1912*)

Now, my son, is life for you,
And I wish you joy of it, —
Joy of power in all you do,
Deeper passion, better wit
Than I had who had enough,
Quicker life and length thereof,
More of every gift but love.

Love I have beyond all men,
Love that now you share with me —
What have I to wish you then
But that you be good and free,
And that God to you may give
Grace in stronger days to live?

For I wish you more than I
Ever knew of glorious deed,
Though no rapture passed me by
That an eager heart could heed,
Though I followed heights and sought
Things the sequel never brought:

Wild and perilous holy things
Flaming with a martyr's blood,
And the joy that laughs and sings

Where a foe must be withstood,
Joy of headlong happy chance
Leading on the battle dance.

But I found no enemy,
No man in a world of wrong,
That Christ's word of charity
Did not render clean and strong —
Who was I to judge my kind,
Blindest groper of the blind?

God to you may give the sight
And the clear undoubting strength
Wars to knit for single right,
Freedom's war to knit at length,
And to win, through wrath and strife,
To the sequel of my life.

But for you, so small and young,
Born on St. Cecilia's Day,
I in more harmonious song
Now for nearer joys should pray —
Simple joys: the natural growth
Of your childhood and your youth,
Courage, innocence, and truth:

These for you, so small and young,
In your hand and heart and tongue.

OF A POET PATRIOT

His songs were a little phrase
Of eternal song,

Drowned in the harping of lays
More loud and long.

His deed was a single word,
Called out alone
In a night when no echo stirred
To laughter or moan.

But his songs new souls shall thrill,
The loud harps dumb,
And his deed the echoes fill
When the dawn is come.

LORD DUNSANY

1878

SONG FROM AN EVIL WOOD

I MET with Death in his country,
With his scythe and his hollow eye,
Walking the roads of Belgium.
I looked and he passed me by.

Since he passed me by in Plug Street
In the wood of the evil name,
I shall not now lie with the heroes,
I shall not share their fame;

I shall never be as they are,
A name in the lands of the Free,
Since I looked on Death in Flanders
And he did not look at me.

EDWARD THOMAS

1878–1917

IF I SHOULD EVER BY CHANCE

If I should ever by chance grow rich
I'll buy Codham, Cockridden, and Childerditch,
Roses, Pyrgo, and Lapwater,
And let them all to my elder daughter.
The rent I shall ask of her will be only
Each year's first violets, white and lonely,
The first primroses and orchises —
She must find them before I do, that is.
But if she finds a blossom on furze
Without rent they shall all forever be hers,
Codham, Cockridden, and Childerditch,
Roses, Pyrgo, and Lapwater, —
I shall give them all to my elder daughter.

ADLESTROP

Yes. I remember Adlestrop —
The name, because one afternoon
Of heat the express-train drew up there
Unwontedly. It was late June.

The steam hissed. Someone cleared his throat.
No one left and no one came
On the bare platform. What I saw
Was Adlestrop — only the name.

And willows, willow-herb, and grass,
And meadowsweet, and haycocks dry,

No whit less still and lonely fair
Than the high cloudlets in the sky.

And for that minute a blackbird sang
Close by, and round him, mistier,
Farther and farther, all the birds
Of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.

THERE'S NOTHING LIKE THE SUN

There's nothing like the sun as the year dies;
Kind as it can be, this world being made so,
To stones and men and beasts and birds and flies —
To all things that it touches except snow,
Whether on mountain side or street or town.
The south wall warms me: November has begun,
Yet never shone the sun as fair as now
While the sweet last-left damsons from the bough
With spangles of the morning's storm drop down
Because the starling shakes it, whistling what
Once swallows sang. But I have not forgot
That there is nothing, too, like March's sun,
Like April's, or July's, or June's, or May's,
Or January's or February's — great days;
And August, September, October, and December
Have equal days, all different from November.
No day of any month but I have said —
Or, if I could live long enough, should say —
"There's nothing like the sun that shines to-day."
There's nothing like the sun till we are dead.

HAROLD MONRO

1879

STRANGE MEETINGS

If suddenly a clod of earth should rise,
And walk about, and breathe, and speak, and love,
How one would tremble, and in what surprise
Gasp: "Can you move?"

I see men walking, and I always feel
"Earth! How have you done this? What can you be?"
I can't learn how to know men, nor conceal
How strange they are to me.

A FLOWER IS LOOKING THROUGH THE GROUND

A flower is looking through the ground,
Blinking at the April weather;
Now a child has seen the flower:
Now they go and play together.

Now it seems the flower will speak,
And will call the child its brother —
But, oh strange forgetfulness! —
They don't recognize each other.

JOSEPH CAMPBELL

1879

I AM THE GILLY OF CHRIST

I AM the gilly of Christ,
The mate of Mary's Son:
I run the roads at seeding time,
And when the harvest's done.

I sleep among the hills.
The heather is my bed;
I dip the termon-well for drink,
And pull the sloe for bread.

No eye has ever seen me,
But shepherds hear me pass,
Singing at fall of even
Along the shadowed grass.

The beetle is my bellman,
The meadow-fire my guide,
The bee and bat my ambling nags
When I have need to ride.

All know me, only the Stranger.
Who sits on the Saxon's height:
He burned the bacach's little house
On last Saint Brigid's Night.

He sups off silver dishes,
And drinks in a golden horn,
But he will wake a wiser man
Upon the Judgment Morn!

I am the gilly of Christ,
The mate of Mary's Son;
I run the roads at seeding time,
And when the harvest's done.

The seed I sow is lucky,
The corn I reap is red,
And whoso sings the Gill's Rann
Will never cry for bread.

THE OLD WOMAN

As a white candle
In a holy place,
So is the beauty
Of an aged face.

As the spent radiance
Of the winter sun,
So is a woman
With her travail done.

Her brood gone from her
And her thoughts as still
As the waters
Under a ruined mill.

SEUMAS O'SULLIVAN

1880

THE ROSSES

My sorrow that I am not by the little dun
By the lake of the starlings at Rosses under the hill,
And the larks there, singing over the fields of dew,
Or evening there, and the sedges still.
For plain I see now the length of the yellow sand,
And Lissadell far off and its leafy ways,
And the holy mountain whose mighty heart
Gathers into it all the coloured days.
My sorrow that I am not by the little dun
By the lake of the starlings at evening when all is still,
And still in whispering sedges the herons stand,
'Tis there I would nestle at rest till the quivering moon
Uprose in the golden quiet over the hill.

PRAISE

Dear, they are praising your beauty,
The grass and the sky:
The sky in a silence of wonder,
The grass in a sigh.

I too would sing for your praising,
Dearest, had I
Speech as the whispering grass,
Or the silent sky.

These have an art for the praising
Beauty so high.

Sweet, you are praised in a silence,
Sung in a sigh.

THE SEDGES

I WHISPERED my great sorrow
To every listening sedge;
And they bent, bowed with my sorrow,
Down to the water's edge.

But she stands and laughs lightly
To see me sorrow so,
Like the light winds that laughing
Across the water go.

If I could tell the bright ones
That quiet-hearted move,
They would bend down like the sedges
With the sorrow of love.

But she stands laughing lightly,
Who all my sorrow knows,
Like the little wind that laughing
Across the water blows.

PADRAIC PEARSE
1880–1916

IDEAL
(Translated from the Irish by Thomas MacDonagh)

NAKED I saw thee,
O beauty of beauty!
And I blinded my eyes
For fear I should flinch.

I heard thy music,
O sweetness of sweetness!
And I shut my ears
For fear I should fail.

I kissed thy lips,
O sweetness of sweetness!
And I hardened my heart
For fear of my ruin.

I blinded my eyes,
And my ears I shut,
I hardened my heart
And my love I quenched.

I turned my back
On the dream I had shaped,
And to this road before me
My face I turned.

I set my face
To the road here before me,
To the work that I see,
To the death I shall meet.

ALFRED NOYES

1880

PARACLETE

Tongue hath not told it,
  Heart hath not known;
Yet shall the bough swing
  When it hath flown.

Dreams have denied it,
  Fools forsworn:
Yet it hath comforted
  Each man born.

Once and again it is
  Blown to me,
Sweet from the wild thyme,
  Salt from the sea;

Blown thro' the ferns
  Faint from the sky;
Shadowed in water,
  Yet clear as a cry.

Light on a face,
  Or touch of a hand,
Making my still heart
  Understand.

Earth hath not seen it,
  Nor heaven above,
Yet shall the wild bough
  Bend with the Dove.

Yea, tho' the bloom fall
Under Thy feet,
Veni, Creator,
Paraclete!

THE STRANGE GUEST

You cannot leave a new house
With any open door,
But a strange guest will enter it
And never leave it more.

Build it on a waste land,
Dreary as a sin.
Leave her but a broken gate,
And beauty will come in.

Build it all of scarlet brick.
Work your wicked will.
Dump it on an ash-heap,
Then — O then, be still.

Sit and watch your new house,
Leave an open door.
A strange guest will enter it
And never leave it more.

She will make your raw wood
Mellower than gold.
She will take your new lamps
And sell them for old.

She will crumble all your pride,
  Break your folly down.
Much that you rejected
  She will bless and crown.

She will rust your naked roof,
  Split your pavement through,
Dip her brush in sun and moon
  And colour it anew.

Leave her but a window
  Wide to wind and rain,
You shall find her footsteps
  When you come again.

Though she keep you waiting
  Many months or years,
She will stain and make it
  Beautiful with tears.

She shall hurt and heal it,
  Soften it and save,
Blessing it, until it stand
  Stronger than the grave.

You cannot leave a new house
  With any open door,
But a strange guest will enter it
  And never leave it more.

THE HIGHWAYMAN

Part One

I

The wind was a torrent of darkness among the gusty trees,
The moon was a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,
The road was a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,
And the highwayman came riding —
Riding — riding —
The highwayman came riding, up to the old inn-door.

II

He'd a French cocked-hat on his forehead, a bunch of lace at his chin,
A coat of the claret velvet, and breeches of brown doe-skin;
They fitted with never a wrinkle: his boots were up to the thigh!
And he rode with a jewelled twinkle,
His pistol butts a-twinkle,
His rapier hilt a-twinkle, under the jewelled sky.

III

Over the cobbles he clattered and clashed in the dark inn-yard,
And he tapped with his whip on the shutters, but all was locked and barred;
He whistled a tune to the window, and who should be waiting there

But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,
Bess, the landlord's daughter,
Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.

IV

And dark in the dark old inn-yard a stable-wicket creaked
Where Tim the ostler listened; his face was white and peaked;
His eyes were hollows of madness, his hair like mouldy hay,
But he loved the landlord's daughter,
The landlord's red-lipped daughter,
Dumb as a dog he listened, and he heard the robber say —

V

"One kiss, my bonny sweetheart, I'm after a prize to-night,
But I shall be back with the yellow gold before the morning light;
Yet, if they press me sharply, and harry me through the day,
Then look for me by moonlight,
Watch for me by moonlight,
I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar the way."

VI

He rose upright in the stirrups; he scarce could reach her hand,
But she loosened her hair i' the casement! His face burnt like a brand

As the black cascade of perfume came tumbling over
his breast;
And he kissed its waves in the moonlight,
(Oh, sweet black waves in the moonlight!)
Then he tugged at his rein in the moonlight, and gal-
loped away to the West.

Part Two

I

He did not come in the dawning; he did not come at
noon;
And out of the tawny sunset, before the rise o' the
moon,
When the road was a gipsy's ribbon, looping the pur-
ple moor,
A red-coat troop came marching —
Marching — marching —
King George's men came marching, up to the old inn-
door.

II

They said no word to the landlord, they drank his ale
instead,
But they gagged his daughter and bound her to the
foot of her narrow bed;
Two of them knelt at her casement, with muskets at
their side!
There was death at every window;
And hell at one dark window;
For Bess could see, through her casement, the road
that *he* would ride.

III

They had tied her up to attention, with many a sniggering jest;
They had bound a musket beside her, with the barrel beneath her breast!
"Now keep good watch!" and they kissed her.
She heard the dead man say —
Look for me by moonlight;
Watch for me by moonlight;
I'll come to thee by moonlight, though hell should bar the way!

IV

She twisted her hands behind her; but all the knots held good!
She writhed her hands till her fingers were wet with sweat or blood!
They stretched and strained in the darkness, and the hours crawled by like years,
Till now, on the stroke of midnight,
Cold, on the stroke of midnight,
The tip of one finger touched it! The trigger at least was hers!

V

The tip of one finger touched it; she strove no more for the rest!
Up, she stood to attention, with the barrel beneath her breast,
She would not risk their hearing; she would not strive again;
For the road lay bare in the moonlight;

Blank and bare in the moonlight;
And the blood of her veins in the moonlight throbbed
to her love's refrain.

VI

Tlot-tlot; tlot-tlot! Had they heard it? The horse-hoofs
ringing clear;
Tlot-tlot, tlot-tlot, in the distance? Were they deaf that
they did not hear?
Down the ribbon of moonlight, over the brow of the
hill,
The highwayman came riding,
Riding, riding!
The red-coats looked to their priming! She stood up,
straight and still.

VII

Tlot-tlot, in the frosty silence! *Tlot-tlot,* in the echoing
night!
Nearer he came and nearer! Her face was like a light!
Her eyes grew wide for a moment; she drew one last
deep breath,
Then her finger moved in the moonlight,
Her musket shattered the moonlight,
Shattered her breast in the moonlight and warned him
— with her death.

VIII

He turned; he spurred to the West; he did not know
who stood
Bowed with her head o'er the musket, drenched with
her own red blood!

Not till the dawn he heard it, his face grew grey to hear
How Bess, the landlord's daughter,
The landlord's black-eyed daughter,
Had watched for her love in the moonlight, and died in the darkness there.

IX

Back, he spurred like a madman, shrieking a curse to the sky,
With the white road smoking behind him and his rapier brandished high!
Blood-red were his spurs i' the golden noon; wine-red was his velvet coat,
When they shot him down on the highway,
Down like a dog on the highway,
And he lay in his blood on the highway, with the bunch of lace at his throat.

. . . . . .

X

And still of a winter's night, they say, when the wind is in the trees,
When the moon is a ghostly galleon tossed upon cloudy seas,
When the road is a ribbon of moonlight over the purple moor,
A highwayman comes riding —
Riding — riding —
A highwayman comes riding, up to the old inn-door.

XI

Over the cobbles he clatters and clangs in the dark inn-yard;

He taps with his whip on the shutters, but all is locked and barred;
He whistles a tune to the window, and who should be waiting there
But the landlord's black-eyed daughter,
Bess, the landlord's daughter,
Plaiting a dark red love-knot into her long black hair.

PADRAIC COLUM

1881

THE PLOUGHER[1]

SUNSET and silence! A man: around him earth savage, earth broken;
Beside him two horses — a plough!

Earth savage, earth broken, the brutes, the dawn man there in the sunset,
And the Plough that is twin to the Sword, that is founder of cities!

"Brute-tamer, plough-maker, earth-breaker! Can'st hear? There are ages between us.
Is it praying you are as you stand there alone in the sunset?

"Surely our sky-born gods can be naught to you, earth child and earth master?

[1] From *Wild Earth*, by Padraic Colum. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

Surely your thoughts are of Pan, or of Wotan, or
Dana?

"Yet why give thought to the gods? Has Pan led your
brutes where they stumble?
Has Dana numbed pain of the child-bed, or Wotan
put hands to your plough?

"What matter your foolish reply! O, man, standing
lone and bowed earthward,
Your task is a day near its close. Give thanks to the
night-giving God."

. . . . . .

Slowly the darkness falls, the broken lands blend with
the savage;
The brute-tamer stands by the brutes, a head's
breadth only above them.

A head's breadth? Ay, but therein is hell's depth, and
the height up to heaven,
And the thrones of the gods and their halls, their
chariots, purples and splendors.

A DROVER[1]

To Meath of the pastures,
From wet hills by the sea,
Through Leitrim and Longford
Go my cattle and me.

I hear in the darkness
Their slipping and breathing —

[1] From *Wild Earth*, by Padraic Colum. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

I name them the bye-ways
They're to pass without heeding;

Then the wet, winding roads,
Brown bogs with black water;
And my thoughts on white ships
And the King o' Spain's daughter.

O farmer! strong farmer!
You can spend at the fair;
But your face you must turn
To your crops and your care.

And soldiers — red soldiers!
You've seen many lands;
But you walk two by two,
And by captain's commands.

O! the smell of the beasts,
The wet wind in the morn;
And the proud and hard earth
Never broken for corn;

And the crowds at the fair,
The herds loosened and blind,
Loud words and dark faces
And the wild blood behind.

(O! strong men, with your best
I would strive breast to breast,
I could quiet your herds
With my words, with my words.)

I will bring you, my kine,
Where there's grass to the knee;
But you'll think of scant croppings
Harsh with salt of the sea.

AN OLD WOMAN OF THE ROADS[1]

O to have a little house!
To own the hearth and stool and all!
The heaped up sods upon the fire,
The pile of turf against the wall!

To have a clock with weights and chains
And pendulum swinging up and down!
A dresser filled with shining delph,
Speckled and white and blue and brown!

I could be busy all the day
Clearing and sweeping hearth and floor,
And fixing on their shelf again
My white and blue and speckled store!

I could be quiet there at night
Beside the fire and by myself,
Sure of a bed and loth to leave
The ticking clock and the shining delph!

Och! but I'm weary of mist and dark,
And roads where there's never a house nor bush,
And tired I am of bog and road
And the crying wind and the lonesome hush!

[1] From *Wild Earth*, by Padraic Colum. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

And I am praying to God on high,
And I am praying Him night and day,
For a little house — a house of my own —
Out of the wind's and the rain's way.

A CONNACHTMAN[1]

It's my fear that my wake won't be quiet,
Nor my wake-house a silent place:
For who would keep back the hundreds
Who would touch my breast and my face?

For the good men were always my friends,
From Galway back into Clare.
In strength, in sport, and in spending,
I was foremost at the fair.

In music, in song, and in friendship,
In contests by night and by day,
By all who knew it was given to me
That I bore the branch away.

Now let Manus Joyce, my friend,
(If he be at all in the place),
Make smooth the boards of the coffin
They will put above my face.

The old men will have their stories
Of all the deeds in my days,
And the young men will stand by the coffin
And be sure and clear in my praise.

[1] From *Wild Earth*, by Padraic Colum. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

But the girls will stay near the door,
And they'll have but little to say:
They'll bend their heads, the young girls,
And for a while they will pray.

And, going home in the dawning,
They'll be quiet with the boys:
The girls will walk together,
And seldom they'll lift the voice.

And then, between daybreak and dark,
And between the hill and the sea,
Three Women, come down from the Mountain,
Will raise the Keen over me.

But 'tis my grief that I will not hear
When the cuckoo cries in Glenart,
That the wind that lifts when the sails are loosed
Will never lift my heart.

HERBERT ASQUITH

1881

THE VOLUNTEER

Here lies a clerk who half his life had spent
Toiling at ledgers in a city grey,
Thinking that so his days would drift away
With no lance broken in life's tournament:
Yet ever 'twixt the books and his bright eyes
The gleaming eagles of the legions came,

And horsemen, charging under phantom skies,
Went thundering past beneath the oriflamme.

And now those waiting dreams are satisfied;
From twilight to the halls of dawn he went;
His lance is broken; but he lies content
With that high hour, in which he lived and died.
And falling thus he wants no recompense,
Who found his battle in the last resort;
Nor needs he any hearse to bear him hence,
Who goes to join the men of Agincourt.

LASCELLES ABERCROMBIE

1881

MARGARET'S SONG

Too soothe and mild your lowland airs
For one whose hope is gone:
I'm thinking of a little tarn,
Brown, very lone.

Would now the tall swift mists could lay
Their wet grasp on my hair;
And the great natures of the hills
Round me friendly were.

In vain! — For taking hills your plains
Have spoilt my soul, I think,
But would my feet were going down
Towards the brown tarn's brink.

THE SALE OF ST. THOMAS

(Abridged)

Now, Thomas, know thy sin. It was not fear;
Easily may a man crouch down for fear,
And yet rise up on firmer knees, and face
The hailing storm of the world with graver courage.
But prudence, prudence is the deadly sin,
And one that groweth deep into a life,
With hardening roots that clutch about the breast.
For this refuses faith in the unknown powers
Within man's nature; shrewdly bringeth all
Their inspiration of strange eagerness
To a judgment bought by safe experience;
Narrows desire into the scope of thought.
But it is written in the heart of man,
Thou shalt no larger be than thy desire.
Thou must not therefore stoop thy spirit's sight
To pore only within the candle-gleam
Of conscious wit and reasonable brain;
But search into the sacred darkness lying
Outside thy knowledge of thyself, the vast,
Measureless fate, full of the power of stars,
The outer noiseless heavens of thy soul.
Keep thy desire closed in the room of light
The labouring fires of thy mind have made,
And thou shalt find the vision of thy spirit
Pitifully dazzled to so shrunk a ken
There are no spacious puissances about it.
But send desire often forth to scan
The immense night which is thy greater soul;
Knowing the possible, see thou try beyond it
Into impossible things, unlikely ends;

And thou shalt find thy knowledgeable desire
Grow large as all the regions of thy soul,
Whose firmament doth cover the whole of Being
And of created purpose reach the ends.

RICHARD MIDDLETON

1882–1911

LOVE'S MORTALITY

The night of nights drew to its tardy close
And through the dew the lily soothed the rose
With words of love immortal,
Till from the golden and desired portal
The curtains of the night were plucked aside,
And dawn led forth my bride.

And forth she came with her young limbs and cool,
Her eyes more clear than any windless pool,
To dance across the day-time,
Crown weary life with garlands of her play-time,
And set a bud betwixt the lips of Death
That sweet might be his breath.

I know that luckless lovers do not die;
Fashioning trifles for eternity
Of golden moments broken,
Of sighs and tears and passionate words half-spoken,
They may not rest, but strew the bitter years
With their immortal tears.

But swift upon my tired ears there fell
Rumour of moon-drunk, star-lit Philomel,
On magic copses flinging
Her song too amorous-sweet for human singing,
And praising ever to her leafy sky
Our glad mortality.

Winning the fierce fulfilment of my love,
Come, Death! the intolerable skies above
No more my heart shall cover;
Earth is too narrow for a happy lover
With planets in his heart and in his hands
Immeasurable lands.

Come, Death, and free me from these earthy walls
That heaven may hold our final festivals
The white stars trembling under!
I am too small to keep this passionate wonder
Within my human frame: I would be dead
That God may be our bed.

I feel her breath upon my eyes, her hair
Falls on me like a blessing, everywhere
I hear her warm blood leaping,
And life it seems is but a fitful sleeping,
And we but fretful shades that dreamed before
That love, and are no more.

JOHN DRINKWATER

1882

BIRTHRIGHT

Lord Rameses of Egypt sighed
Because a summer evening passed;
And little Ariadne cried
That summer fancy fell at last
To dust; and young Verona died
When beauty's hour was overcast.

Theirs was the bitterness we know
Because the clouds of hawthorn keep
So short a state, and kisses go
To tombs unfathomably deep,
While Rameses and Romeo
And little Ariadne sleep.

MAMBLE

I never went to Mamble
That lies above the Teme,
So I wonder who's in Mamble
And whether people seem
Who breed and brew along there
As lazy as the name,
And whether any song there
Sets alehouse wits aflame.

The finger-post says Mamble,
And that is all I know

Of the narrow road to Mamble,
And should I turn and go
To that place of lazy token,
That lies above the Teme,
There might be a Mamble broken
That was lissom in a dream.

So leave the road to Mamble
And take another road
To as good a place as Mamble
Be it lazy as a toad;
Who travels Worcester county
Takes any place that comes
When April tosses bounty
To the cherries and the plums.

LAST CONFESSIONAL

For all ill words that I have spoken,
For all clear moods that I have broken,
For all despite and hasty breath,
Forgive me, Love, forgive me, Death.

Death, master of the great assize,
Love, falling now to memories,
You two alone I need to prove,
Forgive me, Death, forgive me, Love.

For every tenderness undone,
For pride when holiness was none
But only easy charity,
O Death, be pardoner to me.

For stubborn thought that would not make
Measure of love's thought for love's sake,
  But kept a sullen difference,
  Take, Love, this laggard penitence.

For cloudy words too vainly spent
To prosper but in argument,
  When truth stood lonely at the gate,
  On your compassion, Death, I wait.

For all the beauty that escaped
This foolish brain, unsung, unshaped,
  For wonder that was slow to move,
  Forgive me, Death, forgive me, Love.

For love that kept a secret cruse,
For life defeated of its dues,
  This latest word of all my breath —
  Forgive me, Love, forgive me, Death.

JAMES STEPHENS

1882

DEIRDRE[1]

Do not let any woman read this verse;
It is for men, and after them their sons
And their sons' sons.

[1] From *Poems*, by James Stephens. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

The time comes when our hearts sink utterly;
When we remember Deirdre and her tale,
And that her lips are dust.

Once she did tread the earth: men took her hand;
They looked into her eyes and said their say,
And she replied to them.

More than a thousand years it is since she
Was beautiful: she trod the waving grass;
She saw the clouds.

A thousand years! The grass is still the same,
The clouds as lovely as they were that time
When Deirdre was alive.

But there has never been a woman born
Who was so beautiful, not one so beautiful
Of all the women born.

Let all men go apart and mourn together;
No man can ever love her; not a man
Can ever be her lover.

No man can bend before her: no man say —
What could one say to her? There are no words
That one could say to her!

Now she is but a story that is told
Beside the fire! No man can ever be
The friend of that poor queen.

WHAT TOMAS AN BUILE SAID IN A PUB[1]

I saw God. Do you doubt it?
Do you dare to doubt it?
I saw the Almighty Man. His hand
Was resting on a mountain, and
He looked upon the World and all about:
I saw Him plainer than you see me now,
You mustn't doubt it.

He was not satisfied;
His look was all dissatisfied.
His beard swung on a wind far out of sight
Behind the world's curve, and there was light
Most fearful from His forehead, and He sighed,
"That star went always wrong, and from the start
I was dissatisfied."

He lifted up His hand —
I say He heaved a dreadful hand
Over the spinning Earth, then I said: "Stay —
You must not strike it, God, I'm in the way;
And I will never move from where I stand."
He said, "Dear child, I feared that you were dead,"
And stayed His hand.

[1] From *Poems*, by James Stephens. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

JAMES JOYCE

1882

O SWEETHEART, HEAR YOU

O SWEETHEART, hear you
Your lover's tale;
A man shall have sorrow
When friends him fail.

For he shall know then
Friends be untrue
And a little ashes
Their words come to.

But one unto him
Will softly move
And softly woo him
In ways of love.

His hand it under
Her smooth round breast;
So he who has sorrow
Shall have rest.

WINIFRED M. LETTS

1882

SYNGE'S GRAVE

My grief! that they have laid you in the town
Within the moidher of its thousand wheels
And busy feet that travel up and down.

They had a right to choose a better bed
Far off among the hills where silence steals
In on the soul with comfort-bringing tread.

The curlew would have keened for you all day,
The wind across the heather cried Ochone
For sorrow of his brother gone away.

In Glenmalure, far off from town-bred men,
Why would they not have left you sleep alone
At peace there in the shadow of the glen?

To tend your grave you should have had the sun,
The fraughan and the moss, the heather brown
And gorse turned gold for joy of Spring begun.

You should have had your brothers, wind and rain,
And in the dark the stars all looking down
To ask, "When will he take the road again?"

The herdsmen of the lone back hills, that drive
The mountain ewes to some far distant fair,
Would stand and say, "We knew him well alive,

That God may rest his soul!" then they would pass
Into the silence brooding everywhere,
And leave you to your sleep below the grass.

But now among these alien city graves,
What way are you without the rough wind's breath,
You free-born son of mountains and wild waves?

Ah! God knows better — here you've no abode,
So long ago you had the laugh at death,
And rose and took the windswept mountain road.

THE SPIRES OF OXFORD

I saw the spires of Oxford
  As I was passing by,
The grey spires of Oxford
  Against a pearl-grey sky;
My heart was with the Oxford men
  Who went abroad to die.

The years go fast in Oxford,
  The golden years and gay;
The hoary colleges look down
  On careless boys at play,
But when the bugles sounded — War!
  They put their games away.

They left, the peaceful river,
  The cricket field, the quad,
The shaven lawns of Oxford
  To seek a bloody sod.
They gave their merry youth away
  For country and for God.

God rest you, happy gentlemen,
  Who laid your good lives down,
Who took the khaki and the gun
  Instead of cap and gown.
God bring you to a fairer place
  Than even Oxford town.

ANNA WICKHAM

1883

THE TIRED MAN

I AM a quiet gentleman,
And I would sit and dream;
But my wife is on the hillside,
Wild as a hill-stream.

I am a quiet gentleman,
And I would sit and think;
But my wife is walking the whirlwind
Through night as black as ink.

O, give me a woman of my race
As well controlled as I,
And let us sit by the fire,
Patient till we die!

THE WIFE'S SONG

Two gifts I gave you, Love and Sorrow,
Of which the last is best,
But O, my Dear! 'Twas bitter giving,
Come here to me and rest.

What victory shall your world deny you,
Now you have wept?
All peace of love I will restore you
When you have slept.

CREATRIX

Let us thank Almighty God
For the woman with the rod.
Who was ever and is now
Strong essential as the plough.
She shall goad and she shall drive,
So to keep man's soul alive.
Amoris with her scented dress
Beckons, in pretty wantonness;
But the wife drives, nor can man tell
What hands so urge, what powers compel.

CHARLOTTE MEW

THE FARMER'S BRIDE[1]

Three summers since I chose a maid, —
Too young maybe — but more's to do
At harvest-time than bide and woo.
When us was wed she turned afraid
Of love and me and all things human;
Like the shut of a winter's day.
Her smile went out, and 'twasn't a woman —
More like a little frightened fay.
One night in the fall, she runned away.

"Out 'mong the sheep, her be," they said.
Should properly have been abed;

[1] From *Saturday Market*, by Charlotte Mew. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

But sure enough she wasn't there
Lying awake with her wide brown stare.
So over seven-acre field and up-along across the down
We chased her, flying like a hare
Before our lanterns. To Church-town
All in a shiver and a scare
We caught her, fetched her home at last
And turned the key upon her, fast.

She does the work about the house
As well as most, but like a mouse:
  Happy enough to chat and play
  With birds and rabbits and such as they,
  So long as men-folk keep away.
"Not near, not near!" her eyes beseech
When one of us comes within reach.
  The women say that beasts in stall
  Look round like children at her call.
  I've hardly heard her speak at all.

Shy as a leveret, swift as he;
Straight and slight as a young larch tree;
Sweet as the first wild violets, she,
To her wild self. But what to me?
The short days shorten and the oaks are brown,
  The blue smoke rises to the low grey sky,
One leaf in the still air falls slowly down,
  A magpie's spotted feather lies
On the black earth spread white with rime,
The berries redden up to Christmas-time.
  What's Christmas-time without there be
  Some other in the house than we!

She sleeps up in the attic there
Alone, poor maid. 'Tis but a stair
Betwixt us. Oh, my God! — the down,
The soft young down of her; the brown,
The brown of her — her eyes, her hair, her hair!

SEA LOVE[1]

Tide be runnin' the great world over;
'Twas only last June month I mind that we
Was thinkin' the toss and call in the breast of the lover
So everlastin' as the sea.

Here's the same little fishes that sputter and swim,
Wi' the moon's old glim on the grey, wet sand;
An' him no more to me, nor me to him,
Than the wind goin' over my hand.

FRANCIS BRETT YOUNG

1884

FEBRUARY

The robin on my lawn
He was the first to tell
How, in the frozen dawn,
This miracle befell,
Waking the meadows white
With hoar, the iron road
Agleam with splintered light,

[1] From *Saturday Market*, by Charlotte Mew. Reprinted by special arrangement with The Macmillan Company, publishers.

And ice where water flowed:
Till, when the low sun drank
Those milky mists that cloak
Hanger and hollied bank,
The winter world awoke
To hear the feeble bleat
Of lambs on downland farms:
A blackbird whistled sweet;
Old beeches moved their arms
Into a mellow haze
Aerial, newly born:
And I, alone, agaze,
Stood waiting for the thorn
To break in blossom white,
Or burst in a green flame. . . .
So, in a single night,
Fair February came,
Bidding my lips to sing
Or whisper their surprise,
With all the joy of spring
And morning in her eyes.

J. C. SQUIRE

1884

SONG

You are my sky; beneath your circling kindness
My meadows all take in the light and grow;
Laugh with the joy you've given,
The joy you've given,
And open in a thousand buds, and blow.

But when you are sombre, sad, averse, forgetful,
Heavily veiled by clouds that brood with rain,
Dumbly I lie all shadowed,
I lie all shadowed,
And dumbly wait for you to shine again.

THE MARCH

I HEARD a voice that cried, "Make way for those who died!"
And all the coloured crowd like ghosts at morning fled;
And down the waiting road, rank after rank there strode
In mute and measured march a hundred thousand dead.

A hundred thousand dead, with firm and noiseless tread,
All shadowy-grey yet solid, with faces grey and ghast,
And by the house they went, and all their brows were bent
Straight forward; and they passed, and passed, and passed, and passed.

But O there came a place, and O there came a face,
That clenched my heart to see it, and sudden turned my way;
And in the Face that turned I saw two eyes that burned,
Never-forgotten eyes, and they had things to say.

Like desolate stars they shone one moment, and were gone

And I sank down and put my arms across my head,
And felt them moving past, nor looked to see the last,
In steady silent march, our hundred thousand dead.

JAMES ELROY FLECKER

1884–1915

FELO-DE-SE

The song of a man who was dead
Ere any had heard of his song,
Or had seen this his ultimate song,
With the lines of it written in red,
And the sound of it steady and strong.
When you hear it, you know I am dead.

Not because I was weary of life
As pallid poets are:
My star was a conquering star,
My element strife.
I am young, I am strong, I am brave,
It is therefore I go to the grave.

Now to life and to life's desire,
And to youth and the glory of youth,
Farewell, for I go to acquire,
By the one road left me, Truth.
Though a great God slay me with fire
I will shout till he answer me, Why?
(One soul and a Universe, why?)
And for this it is pleasant to die.

For years and years I have slumbered,
And slumber was heavy and sweet,
But the last few moments are numbered,
Like trampling feet that beat.
I shall walk with the stars in their courses,
And hear very soon, very soon,
The voice of the forge of the Forces,
And ride on the ridge of the moon,
And sing a celestial tune.

THE DYING PATRIOT

Day breaks on England down the Kentish hills,
Singing in the silence of the meadow-footing rills,
Day of my dreams, O day!
I saw them march from Dover, long ago,
With a silver cross before them, singing low,
Monks of Rome from their home where the blue seas break in foam,
Augustine with his feet of snow.

Noon strikes on England, noon on Oxford town,
— Beauty she was statue-cold — there's blood upon her gown:
Noon of my dreams, O noon!
Proud and godly kings had built her, long ago,
With her towers and tombs and statues all arow,
With her fair and floral air and the love that lingers there,
And the streets where the great men go.

Evening on the olden, the golden sea of Wales,
When the first star shivers and the last wave pales:

O evening dreams!
  There's a house that Britons walked in, long ago,
  Where now the springs of ocean fall and flow,
And the dead robed in red and sea-lilies overhead
  Sway when the long winds blow.

Sleep not, my country: though night is here, afar
Your children of the morning are clamorous for war:
Fire in the night, O dreams!
  Though she send you as she sent you, long ago,
  South to desert, east to ocean, west to snow,
West of these out to seas colder than the Hebrides I must go,
Where the fleet of stars is anchored and the young Star-captains glow.

BRUMANA

Oh, shall I never never be home again?
Meadows of England shining in the rain
Spread wide your daisied lawns: your ramparts green
With briar fortify, with blossom screen
Till my far morning — and O streams that slow
And pure and deep through plains and playlands go,
For me your love and all your kingcups store,
And — dark militia of the southern shore,
Old fragrant friends — preserve me the last lines
Of that long saga which you sung me, pines,
When, lonely boy, beneath the chosen tree
I listened, with my eyes upon the sea.

O traitor pines, you sang what life has found
The falsest of fair tales.

Earth blew a far-horn prelude all around,
That native music of her forest home,
While from the sea's blue fields and syren dales
Shadows and light noon-spectres of the foam
Riding the summer gales
On aery viols plucked an idle sound.

Hearing you sing, O trees,
Hearing you murmur, "There are older seas,
That beat on vaster sands,
Where the wise snailfish move their pearly towers
To carven rocks and sculptured promont'ries,"
Hearing you whisper, "Lands
Where blaze the unimaginable flowers."

Beneath me in the valley waves the palm,
Beneath, beyond the valley, breaks the sea;
Beneath me sleep in mist and light and calm
Cities of Lebanon, dream-shadow-dim,
Where Kings of Tyre and Kings of Tyre did rule
In ancient days in endless dynasty,
And all around the snowy mountains swim
Like mighty swans afloat in heaven's pool.

But I will walk upon the wooded hill
Where stands a grove, O pines, of sister pines,
And when the downy twilight droops her wing
And no sea glimmers and no mountain shines
My heart shall listen still.
For pines are gossip pines the wide world through
And full of runic tales to sigh or sing.
'Tis ever sweet through pines to see the sky
Mantling a deeper gold or darker blue.

'Tis ever sweet to lie
On the dry carpet of the needles brown,
And though the fanciful green lizard stir
And windy odours light as thistledown
Breathe from the lavdanon and lavender,
Half to forget the wandering and pain,
Half to remember days that have gone by,
And dream and dream that I am home again!

GATES OF DAMASCUS

Four great gates has the city of Damascus,
And four Grand Wardens, on their spears reclining,
All day long stand like tall stone men
And sleep on the towers when the moon is shining.

This is the song of the East Gate Warden
When he locks the great gate and smokes in his garden.

Postern of Fate, the Desert Gate, Disaster's Cavern, Fort of Fear,
The Portal of Bagdad am I, the Doorway of Diarbekir.

The Persian Dawn with new desires may net the flushing mountain spires:
But my gaunt buttress still rejects the suppliance of those mellow fires.

Pass not beneath, O Caravan, or pass not singing. Have you heard
That silence where the birds are dead yet something pipeth like a bird?

Pass not beneath! Men say there blows in stony deserts still a rose
But with no scarlet to her leaf — and from whose heart no perfume flows.

Wilt thou bloom red where she buds pale, thy sister rose? Wilt thou not fail
When noonday flashes like a flail? Leave nightingale the caravan!

Pass then, pass all! "Bagdad!" ye cry, and down the billows of blue sky
Ye beat the bell that beats to hell, and who shall thrust ye back? Not I.

The Sun who flashes through the head and paints the shadows green and red, —
The Sun shall eat thy fleshless dead, O Caravan, O Caravan!

And one who licks his lips for thirst with fevered eyes shall face in fear
The palms that wave, the streams that burst, his last mirage, O Caravan!

And one — the bird-voiced Singing-man — shall fall behind thee, Caravan!
And God shall meet him in the night, and he shall sing as best he can.

And one the Bedouin shall slay, and one, sand-stricken on the way
Go dark and blind; and one shall say — "How lonely is the Caravan!"

Pass out beneath, O Caravan, Doom's Caravan,
Death's Caravan!
I had not told ye, fools, so much, save that I heard
your Singing-man.

This was sung by the West Gate's keeper
When heaven's hollow dome grew deeper.

I am the gate toward the sea: O sailor men, pass out
from me!
I hear you high on Lebanon, singing the marvels of
the sea.

The dragon-green, the luminous, the dark, the serpent-
haunted sea,
The snow-besprinkled wine of earth, the white-and-
blue-flower foaming sea.

Beyond the sea are towns with towers, carved with
lions and lily flowers,
And not a soul in all those lonely streets to while away
the hours.

Beyond the towns, an isle where, bound, a naked giant
bites the ground:
The shadow of a monstrous wing looms on his back:
and still no sound.

Beyond the isle a rock that screams like madmen
shouting in their dreams,
From whose dark issues night and day blood crashes
in a thousand streams.

Beyond the rock is Restful Bay, where no wind
breathes or ripple stirs,
And there on Roman ships, they say, stand rows of
metal mariners.

Beyond the bay in utmost West old Solomon the Jew-
ish King
Sits with his beard upon his breast, and grips and
guards his magic ring:

And when that ring is stolen, he will rise in outraged
majesty,
And take the World upon his back, and fling the World
beyond the sea.

This is the song of the North Gate's master
Who singeth fast, but drinketh faster.

I am the gay Aleppo Gate: a dawn, a dawn and thou
art there:
Eat not thy heart with fear and care, O brother of the
beast we hate!

Thou hast not many miles to tread, nor other foes than
fleas to dread;
Homs shall behold thy morning meal and Hama see
thee safe in bed.

Take to Aleppo filigrane, and take them paste of
apricots,
And coffee tables botched with pearl, and little beaten
brassware pots:

And thou shalt sell thy wares for thrice the Damascene
retailer's price,
And buy a fat Armenian slave who smelleth odorous
and nice.

Some men of noble stock were made: some glory in the
murder-blade:
Some praise a Science or an Art, but I like honourable
Trade!

Sell them the rotten, buy the ripe! Their heads are
weak; their pockets burn.
Aleppo men are mighty fools. Salaam Aleikum! Safe
return!

This is the song of the South Gate Holder,
A silver man, but his song is older.

I am the Gate that fears no fall: the Mihrab of Da-
mascus wall,
The bridge of booming Sinai: the Arch of Allah all in
all.

O spiritual pilgrim rise: the night has grown her sin-
gle horn:
The voices of the souls unborn are half adream with
Paradise.

To Meccah thou hast turned in prayer with aching
heart and eyes that burn:
Ah Hajji, whither wilt thou turn when thou art there,
when thou art there?

God be thy guide from camp to camp: God be thy
shade from well to well;
God grant beneath the desert's stars thou hear the
Prophet's camel bell.

And God shall make thy body pure, and give thee
knowledge to endure
This ghost-life's piercing phantom-pain, and bring
thee out to Life again.

And God shall make thy soul a Glass where eighteen
thousand Æons pass,
And thou shalt see the gleaming Worlds as men see
dew upon the grass.

And son of Islam, it may be that thou shalt learn at
journey's end
Who walks thy garden eve on eve, and bows his head,
and calls thee Friend.

GERALD GOULD

1885

YOU WALK IN A STRANGE WAY

You walk in a strange way,
Your motions sing;
Your eyes have a thing to say,
A secret thing.

Your speech is soft as the sighs
Of the blown South;

Your face is a flower to mine,
A flame to my mouth.

'TIS BUT A WEEK

'Tis but a week since down the glen
The trampling horses came
— Half a hundred fighting men
With all their spears aflame!
They laughed and clattered as they went,
And round about their way
The blackbirds sang with one consent
In the green leaves of May.

Never again shall I see them pass;
They'll come victorious never;
Their spears are withered all as grass,
Their laughter's laid for ever;
And where they clattered as they went,
And where their hearts were gay,
The blackbirds sing with one consent
In the green leaves of May.

F. S. FLINT

1885

LONDON

London, my beautiful,
It is not the sunset
Nor the pale green sky
Shimmering through the curtain

Of the silver birch,
Nor the quietness;
It is not the hopping
Of the little birds
Upon the lawn,
Nor the darkness
Stealing over all things
That moves me.

But as the moon creeps slowly
Over the tree-tops
I think of her
And the glow her passing
Sheds on men.

London, my beautiful,
I will climb
Into the branches
To the moonlit tree-tops,
That my blood may be cooled
By the wind.

JOHN FREEMAN

1885

STONE TREES

Last night a sword-light in the sky
Flashed a swift terror on the dark.
In that sharp light the fields did lie
Naked and stone-like; each tree stood

Like a tranced woman, bound and stark.
Far off the wood
With darkness ridged the riven dark.

And cows astonished stared with fear,
And sheep crept to the knees of cows,
And conies to their burrows slid,
And rooks were still in rigid boughs,
And all things else were still or hid.
From all the wood
Came but the owl's hoot, ghostly, clear.

In that cold trance the earth was held
It seemed an age, or time was nought.
Sure never from that stone-like field
Sprang golden corn, nor from those chill
Grey granite trees was music wrought.
In all the wood
Even the tall poplar hung stone still.

It seemed an age, or time was none . . .
Slowly the earth heaved out of sleep
And shivered, and the trees of stone
Bent and sighed in the gusty wind,
And rain swept as birds flocking sweep.
Far off the wood
Rolled the slow thunders on the wind.

From all the wood came no brave bird,
No song broke through the close-fall'n night,
Nor any sound from cowering herd:
Only a dog's long lonely howl

When from the window poured pale light.
And from the wood
The hoot came ghostly of the owl.

D. H. LAWRENCE

1885

GLOIRE DE DIJON

When she rises in the morning
I linger to watch her.
She stands in silhouette against the window,
And the sunbeams catch her
Glistening white on the shoulders;
While down her sides, the mellow
Golden shadow glows, and her breasts
Swing like full-blown yellow
Gloire de Dijon roses.

She drips herself with water,
And her shoulders
Glisten as silver, they crumple up
Like wet and shaken roses, and I listen
For the rustling of their white, unfolding petals.
In the window full of sunlight
She stirs her golden shadow,
And flashes all herself as sun-bright
As if roses fought with roses.

A BABY ASLEEP AFTER PAIN

As a drenched drowned bee
Hangs numb and heavy from a bending flower,
So clings to me
My baby, her brown hair brushed with wet tears
And laid against her cheek;
Her soft white legs hanging heavily over my arm,
Swinging heavily to my movement as I walk.
My sleeping baby hangs upon my life,
Like a burden she hangs on me.
She has always seemed so light,
But now she is wet with tears and numb with pain.
Even her floating hair sinks heavily,
Reaching downwards;
As the wings of a drenched, drowned bee
Are a heaviness and a weariness.

NOSTALGIA

The place is palpable me, for here I was born
Of this self-same darkness. Yet the shadowy house
below
Is out of bounds, and only the old ghosts know
I have come, I feel them whimper in welcome, and
mourn.

My father suddenly died in the harvesting corn
And the place is no longer ours. Watching, I hear
No sound from the strangers, the place is dark, and
fear
Opens my eyes till the roots of my vision seem torn.

Can I go no nearer, never towards the door?
The ghosts and I we mourn together, and shrink
In the shadow of the cart-shed. Must we hover on the brink
Forever, and never enter the homestead any more?

Is it irrevocable? Can I really not go
Through the open yard-way? Can I not go past the sheds
And through to the mowie? — Only the dead in their beds
Can know the fearful anguish that this is so.

I kiss the stones, I kiss the moss on the wall,
And wish I could pass impregnate into the place.
I wish I could take it all in a last embrace.
I wish with my breast I here could annihilate it all.

SNAKE

A SNAKE came to my water-trough
On a hot, hot day, and I in my pyjamas for the heat,
To drink there.

In the deep, strange-scented shade of the great dark carob tree
I came down the steps with my pitcher
And must wait, must stand and wait, for there he was at the trough before me.

He reached down from a fissure in the earth-wall in the gloom
And trailed his yellow-brown slackness soft-bellied down, over the edge of the stone trough

And rested his throat upon the stone bottom,
And where the water had dripped from the tap, in a small clearness,
He sipped with his straight mouth,
Softly drank through his straight gums, into his slack long body,
Silently.

Someone was before me at my water-trough,
And I, like a second-comer, waiting.

He lifted his head from his drinking, as cattle do,
And looked at me vaguely, as drinking cattle do,
And flickered his two-forked tongue from his lips, and mused a moment,
And stooped and drank a little more,
Being earth-brown, earth-golden from the burning bowels of the earth
On the day of Sicilian July, with Etna smoking.

The voice of my education said to me
He must be killed,
For in Sicily the black, black snakes are innocent, the gold are venomous.

And the voices in me said, If you were a man
You would take a stick and break him now, and finish him off.

But must I confess how I liked him,
How glad I was he had come like a guest in quiet, to drink at my water-trough

And depart peaceful, pacified, and thankless
Into the burning bowels of this earth?

Was it cowardice, that I dared not kill him?
Was it perversity, that I longed to talk to him?
Was it humility, to feel so honoured?
I felt so honoured.

And yet those voices:
If you were not afraid, you would kill him!

And truly I was afraid, I was most afraid,
But even so, honoured still more
That he should seek my hospitality
From out the dark door of the secret earth.

He drank enough
And lifted his head, dreamily, as one who has drunken,
And flickered his tongue like a forked night on the air,
so black,
Seeming to lick his lips,
And looked around like a god, unseeing, into the air,
And slowly turned his head,
And slowly, very slowly, as if thrice adream
Proceeded to draw his slow length curving round
And climb again the broken bank of my wall-face.

And as he put his head into that dreadful hole,
And as he slowly drew up, snake-easing his shoulders,
and entered further,
A sort of horror, a sort of protest against his withdrawing into that horrid black hole,

Deliberately going into the blackness, and slowly
drawing himself after,
Overcame me now his back was turned.

I looked round, I put down my pitcher,
I picked up a clumsy log
And threw it at the water-trough with a clatter.

I think it did not hit him;
But suddenly that part of him that was left behind
convulsed in undignified haste,
Writhed like lightning, and was gone
Into the black hole, the earth-lipped fissure in the wall-
front
At which, in the intense still noon, I stared with fas-
cination.

And immediately I regretted it.
I thought how paltry, how vulgar, what a mean act!
I despised myself and the voices of my accursed human
education.

And I thought of the albatross,
And I wished he would come back, my snake.

For he seemed to me again like a king,
Like a king in exile, uncrowned in the underworld,
Now due to be crowned again.

And so, I missed my chance with one of the lords
Of life.
And I have something to expiate:
A pettiness.

SHANE LESLIE

1886

FLEET STREET

I NEVER see the newsboys run
  Amid the whirling street,
  With swift untiring feet,
To cry the latest venture done,
But I expect one day to hear
  Them cry the crack of doom
  And risings from the tomb,
With great Archangel Michael near;
And see them running through the Fleet
  As messengers of God,
  With Heaven's tidings shod
About their brave unwearied feet.

SIEGFRIED SASSOON

1886

THE KISS

To these I turn, in these I trust:
Brother Lead and Sister Steel.
To his blind power I make appeal;
I guard her beauty clean from rust.

He spins and burns and loves the air,
And splits a skull to win my praise;
But up the nobly marching days
She glitters naked, cold and fair.

Sweet Sister, grant your soldier this:
That in good fury he may feel
The body where he sets his heel
Quail from your downward darting kiss.

A MYSTIC AS SOLDIER

I LIVED my days apart,
Dreaming fair songs for God,
By the glory in my heart
Covered and crowned and shod.

Now God is in the strife,
And I must seek Him there,
Where death outnumbers life,
And fury smites the air.

I walk the secret way
With anger in my brain.
O music through my clay,
When will you sound again?

SICK LEAVE

WHEN I'm asleep, dreaming and lulled and warm,
They come, the homeless ones, the noiseless dead.
While the dim charging breakers of the storm
Bellow and drone and rumble overhead,
Out of the gloom they gather about my bed.
They whisper to my heart; their thoughts are mine.
"Why are you here with all your watches ended?
From Ypres to Frise we sought you in the Line."
In bitter safety I awake, unfriended;

And while the dawn begins with slashing rain
I think of the Battalion in the mud.
"When are you going out to them again?
Are they not still your brothers through our blood?"

EVERYONE SANG

EVERYONE suddenly burst out singing;
And I was filled with such delight
As prisoned birds must find in freedom,
Winging wildly across the white
Orchards and dark-green fields; on — on — and out of sight.

Everyone's voice was suddenly lifted;
And beauty came like the setting sun:
My heart was shaken with tears; and horror
Drifted away . . . O, but Everyone
Was a bird; and the song was wordless — the singing will never be done.

RUPERT BROOKE

1887–1915

PEACE[1]

Now, God be thanked Who has matched us with His hour,
And caught our youth, and wakened us from sleeping,

[1] From *Collected Poems*, by Rupert Brooke. By permission of Dodd, Mead & Co., publishers.

With hand made sure, clear eye, and sharpened power,
To turn, as swimmers into cleanness leaping,
Glad from a world grown old and cold and weary,
Leave the sick hearts that honour could not move,
And half-men, and their dirty songs and dreary,
And all the little emptiness of love!

Oh! we, who have known shame, we have found release there,
Where there's no ill, no grief, but sleep has mending,
Naught broken save this body, lost but breath;
Nothing to shake the laughing heart's long peace there
But only agony, and that has ending;
And the worst friend and enemy is but Death.

THE DEAD[1]

Blow out, you bugles, over the rich Dead!
There's none of these so lonely and poor of old,
But dying, has made us rarer gifts than gold.
These laid the world away; poured out the red
Sweet wine of youth; gave up the years to be
Of work and joy, and that unhoped serene
That men call age; and those who would have been,
Their sons, they gave, their immortality.

Blow, bugles, blow! They brought us, for our dearth,
Holiness, lacked so long, and Love, and Pain.
Honour has come back, as a king, to earth,
And paid his subjects with a royal wage;
And Nobleness walks in our ways again;
And we have come into our heritage.

[1] From *Collected Poems*, by Rupert Brooke. By permission of Dodd, Mead & Co., publishers.

THE SOLDIER[1]

If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is forever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's breathing English air,
Washed by the rivers, blessed by suns of home.

And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.

JOSEPH MARY PLUNKETT

1887–1916

THE DARK WAY

Rougher than death the road I choose
Yet shall my feet not walk astray,
Though dark, my way I shall not lose
For this way is the darkest way.

Set but a limit to the loss
And something shall at last abide,

[1] From *Collected Poems*, by Rupert Brooke. By permission of Dodd, Mead & Co., publishers.

The blood-stained beams that formed the cross,
  The thorns that crowned the crucified;

But who shall lose all things in One,
  Shut out from Heaven and the Pit,
Shall lose the darkness and the sun,
  The finite and the infinite;

And who shall see in one small flower
  The chariots and the thrones of might,
Shall be in peril from that hour
  Of blindness and the endless night.

And who shall hear in one short name
  Apocalyptic thunders seven,
His heart shall flicker like a flame
  'Twixt Hell's gates and the gates of Heaven.

For I have seen your body's grace,
  The miracle of the flowering rod,
And in the beauty of your face
  The glory of the face of God.

And I have heard the thunderous roll
  Clamoured from heights of prophecy,
Your splendid name, and from my soul
  Uprose the clouds of minstrelsy.

Now I have chosen in the dark
  The desolate way to walk alone,
Yet strive to keep alive one spark
  Of your known grace and grace unknown;

And when I leave you lest my love
Should seal your spirit's ark with clay,
Spread your bright wings, O shining Dove —
But my way is the darkest way.

POPPIES

O Sower of sorrow
From the seed of your sowing
Tomorrow the mower
The wheat will be mowing.

O Reaper of ruth
Mid the roots of your reaping
Springs the truth that in sleep
Bears the fruit of all sleeping.

O Binder of sheaves
That are loose for your binding,
Withered leaves you shall find
And shall lose after finding.

EDITH SITWELL

1887

THE WEB OF EROS

Within your magic web of hair lies furled
The fire and splendour of the ancient world;
The dire gold of the comet's wind-blown hair;
The songs that turned to gold the evening air

When all the stars of heaven sang for joy;
The flames that burnt the cloud-high city Troy;
The maenad fire of spring on the cold earth;
The myrrh-lit flame that gave both death and birth
To the soul Phoenix; and the star-bright shower
That came to Danaë in her brazen tower . . .
Within your magic web of hair lies furled
The fire and splendour of the ancient world.

JULIAN GRENFELL

1888–1915

INTO BATTLE

The naked earth is warm with Spring,
And with green grass and bursting trees
Leans to the sun's gaze glorying,
And quivers in the sunny breeze;
And Life is Colour and Warmth and Light,
And a striving evermore for these;
And he is dead who will not fight;
And who dies fighting has increase.

The fighting man shall from the sun
Take warmth, and life from the glowing earth;
Speed with the light-foot winds to run,
And with the trees to newer birth;
And find, when fighting shall be done,
Great rest, and fulness after dearth.

All the bright company of Heaven
Hold him in their high comradeship,

The Dog-Star, and the Sisters Seven,
Orion's Belt and sworded hip.

The woodland trees that stand together,
They stand to him each one a friend;
They gently speak in the windy weather;
They guide to valley and ridges' end.

The kestrel hovering by day,
And the little owls that call by night,
Bid him be swift and keen as they,
As keen of ear, as swift of sight.

The blackbird sings to him, "Brother, brother,
If this be the last song you shall sing,
Sing well, for you may not sing another;
Brother, sing."

In dreary, doubtful waiting hours,
Before the brazen frenzy starts,
The horses show him nobler powers;
O patient eyes, courageous hearts!

And when the burning moment breaks,
And all things else are out of mind,
And only Joy-of-Battle takes
Him by the throat, and makes him blind,

Through joy and blindness he shall know,
Not caring much to know, that still
Nor lead nor steel shall reach him, so
That it be not the Destined Will.

The thundering line of battle stands,
And in the air Death moans and sings;
But Day shall clasp him with strong hands,
And Night shall fold him in soft wings.

W. J. TURNER

1889

ROMANCE

When I was but thirteen or so
I went into a golden land,
Chimborazo, Cotopaxi
Took me by the hand.

My father died, my brother too,
They passed like fleeting dreams,
I stood where Popocatapetl
In the sunlight gleams.

I dimly heard the master's voice
And boys far off at play,
Chimborazo, Cotopaxi
Had stolen me away.

I walked in a great golden dream
The town streets, to and fro,
Shining Popocatapetl
Gleamed with his cap of snow.

I walked home with a gold dark boy
And never a word I'd say,

Chimborazo, Cotopaxi
Had taken my speech away:

I gazed entranced upon his face
Fairer than any flower —
O shining Popocatapetl,
It was thy magic hour!

The houses, people, traffic seemed
Thin fading dreams by day,
Chimborazo, Cotopaxi,
They had stolen my soul away.

PATRICK MACGILL

1890

DEATH AND THE FAIRIES

Before I joined the army
I lived in Donegal,
Where every night the Fairies
Would hold their carnival.

But now I'm out in Flanders,
Where men like wheat-ears fall,
And it's Death and not the Fairies
Who is holding carnival.

SLAINTHE!

I speak with a proud tongue of the people who were
And the people who are,

The worthy of Ardara, the Rosses and Inishkeel,
My kindred —
The people of the hills and the dark-haired passes,
My neighbors on the lift of the brae,
In the lap of the valley.

To them Slainthe!

I speak of the old men,
The wrinkle-rutted,
Who dodder about foot-weary —
For their day is as the day that has been and is no more —
Who warm their feet by the fire,
And recall memories of the times that are gone;
Who kneel in the lamplight and pray
For the peace that has been theirs —
And who beat one dry-veined hand against another
Even in the sun —
For the coldness of death is on them.

I speak of the old women
Who danced to yesterday's fiddle
And dance no longer.
They sit in a quiet place and dream
And see visions
Of what is to come,
Of their issue,
Which has blossomed to manhood and womanhood —
And seeing thus
They are happy
For the day that was leaves no regrets,
And peace is theirs,
And perfection.

I speak of the strong men
Who shoulder their burdens in the hot day,
Who stand in the market place
And bargain in loud voices,
Showing their stock to the world.
Straight the glance of their eyes —
Broad-shouldered,
Supple.
Under their feet the holms blossom,
The harvest yields.
And their path is of prosperity.

I speak of the women,
Strong-hipped, full-bosomed,
Who drive the cattle to graze at dawn,
Who milk the cows at dusk.
Grace in their homes,
And in the crowded ways
Modest and seemly —
Mother of children!

I speak of the children
Of the many townlands,
Blossoms of the Bogland,
Flowers of the Valley,
Who know not yesterday nor tomorrow,
And are happy,
The pride of those who have begot them.

And thus it is,
Ever and always,
And Ardara, the Rosses and Inishkeel —
Here, as elsewhere,

The Weak, the Strong, and the Blossoming —
And thus my kindred.

To them Slainthe!

FREDERIC MANNING

THE SIGN

(*From the Trenches*)

We are here in a wood of little beeches;
And the leaves are like black lace
Against a sky of nacre.

One bough of clear promise
Across the moon.

It is in this wise that God speaketh unto me.
He layeth hands of healing upon my flesh,
Stilling it in an eternal peace;
Until my soul reaches out myriad and infinite hands
Toward him,
And is eased of its hunger.

And I know that this passes —
This implacable fury and torment of men —
As a thing insensate and vain.
And the stillness hath said unto me,
Over the tumult of sounds and shaken flame,
Out of the terrible beauty of wrath,
I alone am eternal.

One bough of clear promise
Across the moon.

ALAN MACKINTOSH

DEATH

Because I have made light of death
And mocked at wounds and pain,
The doom is laid on me to die —
Like the humble men in days gone by —
That angered me to hear them cry
For pity to me in vain.

I shall not go out suddenly
As many a man has done,
But I shall lie as those men lay,
Longing for death the whole long day,
Praying, as I heard those men pray,
And none shall heed me, none.

The fierce waves will go surging on
Before they tend to me.
Oh, God of battles, I pray you send
No word of pity — no help, no friend,
That if my spirit break at the end
None may be there to see.

FRANCIS LEDWIDGE

1891–1917

LAMENT FOR THE POETS: 1916

I HEARD the Poor Old Woman say:
"At break of day the fowler came,
And took my blackbirds from their songs
Who loved me well through shame and blame.

No more from lovely distances
Their songs shall bless me mile by mile,
Not to white Ashbourne call me down
To wear my crown another while.

With bended flowers the angels mark
For the skylark the place they lie,
From there its little family
Shall dip their wings first in the sky.

And when the first surprise of flight
Sweet songs excite, from the far dawn
Shall there come blackbirds loud with love,
Sweet echoes of the singers gone.

But in the lonely hush of eve
Weeping I grieve the silent bills."
I heard the Poor Old Woman say
In Derry of the little hills.

THE WIFE OF LLEW

AND Gwydion said to Math, when it was Spring:
"Come now and let us make a wife for Llew."

And so they broke broad boughs yet moist with dew,
And in a shadow made a magic ring:
They took the violet and the meadow-sweet
To form her pretty face, and for her feet
They built a mound of daisies on a wing,
And for her voice they made a linnet sing
In the wide poppy blowing for her mouth.
And over all they chanted twenty hours.
And Llew came singing from the azure south
And bore away his wife of birds and flowers.

THE HOMECOMING OF THE SHEEP

The sheep are coming home in Greece,
Hark the bells on every hill!
Flock by flock, and fleece by fleece,
Wandering wide a little piece
Through the evening red and still,
Stopping where the pathways cease,
Cropping with a hurried will.

Through the cotton-bushes low
Merry boys with shouldered crooks
Close them in a single row,
Shout among them as they go
With one bell-ring o'er the brooks.
Such delight you never know
Reading it from gilded books.

Before the early stars are bright
Cormorants and sea-gulls call,
And the moon comes large and white
Filling with a lovely light

The ferny curtained waterfall.
Then sleep wraps every bell up tight
And the climbing moon grows small.

IRENE RUTHERFORD McLEOD

1891

IS LOVE, THEN, SO SIMPLE?

Is love, then, so simple, my dear?
The opening of a door,
And seeing all things clear?
I did not know before.

I had thought it unrest and desire,
Soaring only to fall,
Annihilation and fire:
It is not so at all.

I feel no desperate will,
But I think I understand
Many things, as I sit quite still
With Eternity in my hands.

SO BEAUTIFUL YOU ARE, INDEED

So beautiful you are, indeed,
That I am troubled when you come,
And though I crave you for my need,
Your nearness strikes me blind and dumb.

And when you bring your lips to mine
My spirit trembles and escapes,
And you and I are turned divine,
Bereft of our familiar shapes.

And fearfully we tread cold space,
Naked of flesh and winged with flame,
. . . Until we find us face to face,
Each calling on the other's name!

RICHARD ALDINGTON

1892

AFTER TWO YEARS

She is all so slight
And tender and white
  As a May morning.
She walks without hood
At dusk. It is good
  To hear her sing.

It is God's will
That I shall love her still
  As He loves Mary.
And night and day
I will go forth to pray
  That she love me.

She is as gold
Lovely, and far more cold.
  Do thou pray with me,

For if I win grace
To kiss twice her face
God has done well to me.

THE WINE-CUP

Life was to us an amphora of wine
Pressed from full grapes
Upon the warm slopes of the Cyclades —
Wine that brings light
Into the gloomiest eyes of man,
Wine, cooled and mingled for the eager lip.

We had but gazed upon the amphora,
Touching the figures painted on its flanks —
Achilles reining in his four great horses
Or Mænads dancing to a faun's pipe.

We had but sipped the wine,
Watching its changing hue —
Deep purple in the shadowy amphora
But crimson where the light
Pierces the crystal cup.

And if we thought:
"True, the cup is soon emptied,
The amphora rings hollow
And our veins lack warmth and life" —
It did but give a gentle melancholy
Making our present joy more keen and clear.

But now
Cold, terrible, unseen hands

Have dragged the cup from us;
We are distracted
As a poor goatherd of the Thracian hills
Robbed of his flock and sun-tanned wife
By Scythian robbers,
Hurrying in anguish to the unfriendly town
As we to death.

CHORICOS

The ancient songs
Pass deathward mournfully.

Cold lips that sing no more, and withered wreaths,
Regretful eyes, and drooping breasts and wings —
Symbols of ancient songs
Mournfully passing
Down to the great white surges,
Watched of none
Save the frail sea-birds
And the lithe pale girls,
Daughters of Okeanos.

And the songs pass
From the green land
Which lies upon the waves as a leaf
On the flowers of hyacinth;
And they pass from the waters,
The manifold winds and the dim moon.
And they come,
Silently winging through soft Kimmerian dusk,
To the quiet level lands

That she keeps for us all,
That she wrought for us all for sleep
In the silver days of the earth's dawning —
Proserpina, daughter of Zeus.

And we turn from the Kyprian's breasts,
And we turn from thee,
Phoibos Apollon,
And we turn from the music of old
And the hills that we loved and the meads,
And we turn from the fiery day,
And the lips that were over-sweet;
For silently
Brushing the fields with red-shod feet,
With purple robe
Searing the grass as with a sudden flame,
Death,
Thou hast come upon us.

And of all the ancient songs
Passing to the swallow-blue halls
By the dark streams of Persephone,
This only remains:
That in the end we turn to thee,
Death,
We turn to thee, singing
One last song.

O Death,
Thou art an healing wind
That blowest over white flowers
A-tremble with dew.
Thou art a wind flowing

Over far leagues of lonely sea.
Thou art the dusk and the fragrance;
Thou art the lips of love mournfully smiling;
Thou art the sad peace of one
Satiate with old desires.
Thou art the silence of beauty;
And we look no more for the morning,
We yearn no more for the sun,
Since with thy white hands,
Death,
Thou crownest us with the pallid chaplets,
The slim colorless poppies
Which in thy garden alone
Softly thou gatherest.

And silently,
And with slow feet approaching,
And with bowed head and unlit eyes,
We kneel before thee.
And thou, leaning toward us,
Caressingly layest upon us
Flowers from thy thin cold hands;
And, smiling as a chaste woman
Knowing love in her heart,
Thou sealest our eyes,
And the illimitable quietude
Comes gently upon us.

EDWARD SHANKS

1892

FOR REMEMBRANCE

Let us remember how we came
To Fletching in the trees,
Where stood the high and misty down
Between us and the seas.

Let us remember how we crossed
Ouse, Adur, Arun, three
Slight rivers rolling in their broad
Green valleys to the sea.

Let us remember most of all
When this bright air no more
We breathe, what young and morning oaths
On the high hills we swore.

WASTE

So rich a treasure in yourself you bring
That some is spilt and wasted on the way,
As low clouds, halting, on wild seas astray,
Cheat the thick, thirsty blossoms of the spring;
And some I waste. But in our later years
We shall remember how, too prodigal,
We let the precious drops of honey fall,
And pay for them at last with useless tears.
Ah, waste, waste, waste! However much there is,
There's not too much for bare and mortal days,
That now, receding in youth's golden haze,

Seem dim but ever full eternities.
But there's an end! Take heed, lest you and I
Have wasted wealth to think on when we die.

OSBERT SITWELL

1892

LONDON SQUARES

To-night this city seems delirious. The air
Is fevered, hot and heavy — yet each street,
Each tortuous lane and slumbering stone-bound square
Smells of the open woods, so wild and sweet.
Through the dim spaces, where each town-bred tree
Sweeps out, mysterious and tall and still,
The country's passionate spirit — old and free —
Flings off the fetters of the calm and chill.

There in the garden, fauns leap out and sing —
Chant those strange sun-born songs from far away!
With joyous ecstasy in this new spring,
They cast the coats and top-hats of the day.

There by the railings, where the women pace
With painted faces, passionless and dead,
Out of the dark Pan shows his leering face,
Mocks their large hats and faces painted red.
Then as they walk away, he mocks their lives,
Racking each wearied soul with lost desires,
And, cruelty more subtle, he contrives
With aching memories of love's first fires

To tune their hearts up to a different key.
So, when they sleep, the withered years unfold, —
Again, as children round a mother's knee
They listen to their future as foretold, —
A future rich and innocent and gay.

Then wake up to the agony of day!

THE LAMENT OF THE MOLE-CATCHER

An old, sad man who catches moles
  Went lonely down the lane —
All lily-green were the lanes and knolls,
  But sorrow numbed his brain.
He paid no heed to flower or weed
  As he went his lonely way.
No note he heard from any bird
  That sang that sad spring day.

"I trapp'd the moles for forty years,
  Who could not see the sky,
I reckoned not blind blood or tears,
  And the Lord has seen them die.
For forty years I've sought to slay
  The small, the dumb, the blind,
But now the Lord has made me pay,
  And I am like their kind.
I cannot see or lane or hill,
  Or flower or bird or moon;
Lest life shall lay me lower still,
  O Lord — come take it soon."

ROBERT NICHOLS

1893

THE DAY'S MARCH

THE battery grides and jingles,
Mile succeeds to mile;
Shaking the noonday sunshine,
The guns lunge out awhile,
And then are still awhile.

We amble along the highway;
The reeking, powdery dust
Ascends and cakes our faces
With a striped, sweaty crust.

Under the still sky's violet
The heat throbs on the air . . .
The white road's dusty radiance
Assumes a dark glare.

With a head hot and heavy,
And eyes that cannot rest,
And a black heart burning
In a stifled breast, —

I sit in the saddle,
I feel the road unroll,
And keep my senses straightened
Toward to-morrow's goal.

There, over unknown meadows
Which we must reach at last,

Day and night thunders
A black and chilly blast.

Heads forget heaviness,
Hearts forget spleen,
For by that mighty winnowing
Being is blown clean.

Light in the eyes again,
Strength in the hand,
A spirit dares, dies, forgives,
And can understand!

And, best! Love comes again
After grief and shame,
And along the wind of death
Throws a clean flame.

. . . . .

The battery grides and jingles,
Mile succeeds to mile;
Suddenly battering the silence
The guns burst out awhile.

. . . . .

I lift my head and smile.

NEARER

Nearer and ever nearer . . .
My body, tired but tense,
Hovers 'twixt vague pleasure
And tremulous confidence.

Arms to have and to use them,
And a soul to be made
Worthy, if not worthy;
If afraid, unafraid.

To endure for a little,
To endure and have done:
Men I love about me,
Over me the sun!

And should at last suddenly
Fly the speeding death,
The four great quarters of heaven
Receive this little breath.

BY THE WOOD

How still the day is, and the air how bright!
A thrush sings and is silent in the wood;
The hillside sleeps dizzy with heat and light;
A rhythmic murmur fills the quietude;
A woodpecker prolongs his leisured flight,
Rising and falling on the solitude.

But there are those who far from yon wood lie,
Buried within the trench where all were found,
A weight of mould oppresses every eye,
Within that cabin close their limbs are bound,
And there they rot amid the long, profound,
Disastrous silence of grey earth and sky.

These once, too, rested where now rests but one,
Who scarce can lift his panged and heavy head,

Who drinks in grief the hot light of the sun,
Whose eyes watch dully the green branches spread,
Who feels his currents ever slowlier run,
Whose lips repeat a silent . . . "Dead! all dead!"

O youth to come shall drink air warm and bright,
Shall hear the bird cry in the sunny wood,
All my Young England fell to-day in fight:
That bird, that wood, was ransomed by our blood!

I pray you when the drums roll let your mood
Be worthy of our deaths and your delight.

WILFRED OWEN

1893–1918

STRANGE MEETING

It seemed that out of the battle I escaped
Down some profound dull tunnel, long since scooped
Through granites which Titanic wars had groined.
Yet also there encumbered sleepers groaned,
Too fast in thought or death to be bestirred.
Then, as I probed them, one sprang up and stared
With piteous recognition in fixed eyes,
Lifting distressful hands as if to bless.
And by his smile I knew that sullen hall:
With a thousand fears that vision's face was grained;
Yet no blood reached there from the upper ground,
And no guns thumped, or down the flues made moan.
"Strange friend," I said, "here is no cause to mourn."

"None," said the other, "but the undone years,
The hopelessness. Whatever hope is yours
Was my life also; I went hunting wild
After the wildest beauty in the world,
Which lies not calm in eyes, or braided hair,
But mocks the steady running of the hour,
And if it grieves, grieves richlier than here.
For by my glee might many men have laughed,
And of my weeping something has been left
Which must die now. I mean the truth untold,
The pity of war, the pity war distilled.
Now men will go content with what we spoiled,
Or, discontent, boil bloody, and be spilled.
They will be swift with swiftness of the tigress,
None will break ranks, though nations trek from progress.
Courage was mine, and I had mystery;
Wisdom was mine, and I had mastery;
To miss the march of this retreating world
Into vain citadels that are not walled.
Then, when much blood had clogged their chariot-wheels,
I would go up and wash them from sweet wells,
Even with truths that lie too deep for taint.
I would have poured my spirit without stint,
But not through wounds; not on the cess of war.
Foreheads of men have bled where no wounds were.
I am the enemy you killed, my friend.
I knew you in this dark; for so you frowned
Yesterday through me as you jabbed and killed.
I parried; but my hands were loath and cold.
Let us sleep now. . . ."

APOLOGIA PRO POEMATE MEO

I, TOO, saw God through mud —
The mud that cracked on cheeks when wretches smiled.
War brought more glory to their eyes than blood,
And gave their laughs more glee than shakes a child.

Merry it was to laugh there —
Where death becomes absurd and life absurder.
For power was on us as we slashed bones bare
Not to feel sickness or remorse of murder.

I, too, have dropped off fear —
Behind the barrage, dead as my platoon,
And sailed my spirit surging, light and clear
Past the entanglement where hopes lay strewn;

And witnessed exultation —
Faces that used to curse me, scowl for scowl,
Shine and lift up with passion of oblation,
Seraphic for an hour; though they were foul.

I have made fellowships —
Untold of happy lovers in old song.
For love is not the binding of fair lips
With the soft silk of eyes that look and long,

By Joy, whose ribbon slips, —
But wound with war's hard wire whose stakes are strong;
Bound with the bandage of the arm that drips;
Knit in the welding of the rifle-thong.

I have perceived much beauty
In the hoarse oaths that kept our courage straight;
Heard music in the silentness of duty;
Found peace where shell-storms spouted reddest spate.

Nevertheless, except you share
With them in hell the sorrowful dark of hell,
Whose world is but the trembling of a flare,
And heaven but as the highway for a shell,

You shall not hear their mirth:
You shall not come to think them well content
By any jest of mine. These men are worth
Your tears: you are not worth their merriment.

ANTHEM FOR DOOMED YOUTH

What passing-bells for those who die as cattle?
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
Can patter out their hasty orisons.
No mockeries for them; no prayers nor bells,
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, —
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?
Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

ALDOUS HUXLEY

1894

ANNIVERSARIES

Once more the windless days are here,
Quiet of autumn, when the year
Halts and looks backward and draws breath
Before it plunges into death.
Silver of mist and gossamers,
Through-shine of noonday's glassy gold,
Pale blue of skies, where nothing stirs
Save one blanched leaf, weary and old,
That over and over slowly falls
From the mute elm-trees, hanging on air
Like tattered flags along the walls
Of chapels deep in sunlit prayer.
Once more . . . Within its flawless glass
To-day reflects that other day,
When, under the bracken, on the grass,
We who were lovers happily lay
And hardly spoke, or framed a thought
That was not one with the calm hills
And crystal sky. Ourselves were nought,
Our gusty passions, our burning wills
Dissolved in boundlessness, and we
Were almost bodiless, almost free.

The wind has shattered silver and gold.
Night after night of sparkling cold,
Orion lifts his tangled feet
From where the tossing branches beat
In a fine surf against the sky.

So the trance ended, and we grew
Restless, we knew not how or why;
And there were sudden gusts that blew
Our dreaming banners into storm;
We wore the uncertain crumbling form
Of a brown swirl of windy leaves,
A phantom shape that stirs and heaves
Shuddering from earth, to fall again
With a dry whisper of withered rain.

Last, from the dead and shrunken days
We conjured spring, lighting the blaze
Of burnished tulips in the dark;
And from black frost we struck a spark
Of blue delight and fragrance new,
A little world of flowers and dew.
Winter for us was over and done:
The drought of fluttering leaves had grown
Emerald shining in the sun,
As light as glass, as firm as stone.
Real once more: for we had passed
Through passion into thought again;
Shaped our desires and made that fast
Which was before a cloudy pain;
Moulded the dimness, fixed, defined
In a fair statue, strong and free,
Twin bodies flaming into mind,
Poised on the brink of ecstasy.

MOLE

Tunnelled in solid blackness creeps
The old mole-soul, and wakes or sleeps,

He knows not which, but tunnels on
Through ages of oblivion;
Until at last the long constraint
Of each-hand wall is lost, and faint
Comes daylight creeping from afar,
And mole-work grows crepuscular.
Tunnel meets air and bursts; mole sees
Men hugely walking . . . or are they trees?
And far horizons smoking blue,
And chasing clouds for ever new;
Green hills, like lighted lamps aglow
Or quenching 'neath the cloud-shadow;
Quenching and blazing turn by turn,
Spring's great green signals fitfully burn.
Mole travels on, but finds the steering
A harder task of pioneering
Than when he thridded through the strait
Blind catacombs that ancient fate
Had carved for him. Stupid and dumb
And blind and touchless he had come
A way without a turn; but here,
Under the sky, the passenger
Chooses his own best way; and mole
Distracted wanders, yet his hole
Regrets not much wherein he crept,
But runs, a joyous nympholept,
This way and that, by all made mad —
River nymph and oread,
Ocean's daughters and Lorelei
Combing the silken mystery,
The glaucous gold of her rivery tresses —
Each haunts the traveller, each possesses
The drunken wavering smile awhile;

Then with a phantom cock-crow smile
Mocks craving with sheer vanishment.
Mole-eyes grow hawks: knowledge is sent
In grudging driblets that pay high
Unconscionable usury
To unrelenting life. Mole learns
To travel more secure; the turns
Of his long way less puzzling seem,
And all those magic forms that gleam
In airy invitation, cheat
Less often than they did of old.
The earth slopes upward, fold by fold
Of quiet hills that meet the gold
Serenity of western skies.
Over the world's edge with clear eyes
Our mole transcendent sees his way
Tunnelled in light: he must obey
Necessity again and thrid
Close catacombs as erst he did,
Fate's tunnellings, himself must bore
Through the sunset's inmost core.
The guiding walls to each-hand shine
Luminous and crystalline;
And mole shall tunnel on and on,
Till night let fall oblivion.

ROBERT GRAVES

1895

SULLEN MOODS

Love, do not count your labour lost
  Though I turn sullen, grim, retired
Even at your side; my thought is crossed
  With fancies by old longings fired.

And when I answer you, some days
  Vaguely and wildly, do not fear
That my love walks forbidden ways,
  Breaking the ties that hold it here.

If I speak gruffly, this mood is
  Mere indignation at my own
Shortcomings, plagues, uncertainties;
  I forget the gentler tone.

You, now that you have come to be
  My one beginning, prime and end,
I count at last as wholly me,
  Lover no longer nor yet friend.

Friendship is flattery, though close hid;
  Must I then flatter my own mind?
And must (which laws of shame forbid)
  Blind love of you make self-love blind?

Do not repay me my own coin,
  The sharp rebuke, the frown, the groan;
Remind me, rather, to disjoin
  Your emanation from my own.

Help me to see you as before
When overwhelmed and dead, almost,
I stumbled on that secret door
Which saves the live man from the ghost.

Be once again the distant light,
Promise of glory, not yet known
In full perfection — wasted quite
When on my imperfection thrown.

A PINCH OF SALT

When a dream is born in you
With a sudden clamourous pain,
When you know the dream is true
And lovely, with no flaw or stain, —
O then, be careful, or with sudden clutch
You'll hurt the delicate thing you prize so much.

Dreams are like a bird that mocks,
Flirting the feathers of his tail,
When you seize at the salt-box
Over the hedge you'll see him sail.
Old birds are neither caught with salt nor chaff:
They watch you from the apple-bough and laugh.

Poet, never chase the dream.
Laugh yourself, and turn away.
Mask your hunger, let it seem
Small matter if he come or stay;
But when he nestles in your hand at last,
Close up your fingers tight and hold him fast.

NOT DEAD

Walking through trees to cool my heat and pain,
I know that David's with me here again.
All that is simple, happy, strong, he is.
Caressingly I stroke
Rough bark of the friendly oak.
A brook goes babbling by; the voice is his.
Turf burns with pleasant smoke;
I laugh at chaffinch and at primroses.
All that is simple, happy, strong, he is.
Over the whole wood in a little while
Breaks his slow smile.

CHARLES HAMILTON SORLEY

1895

TO GERMANY

You are blind like us. Your hurt no man designed,
And no man claimed the conquest of your land.
But, gropers both through fields of thought confined,
We stumble and we do not understand.
You only saw your future bigly planned,
And we, the tapering paths of our own mind,
And in each other's dearest ways we stand,
And hiss and hate, and the blind fight the blind.

When it is peace, then we may view again
With new-won eyes each other's truer form,
And wonder. Grown more loving-kind and warm,

We'll grasp firm hands and laugh at the old pain,
When it is peace. But, until peace, the storm,
The darkness, and the thunder and the rain.

GEOFFREY DEARMER

THE TURKISH TRENCH DOG

NIGHT held me as I crawled and scrambled near
The Turkish lines. Above, the mocking stars
Silvered the curving parapet, and clear
Cloud-latticed beams o'er-flecked the land with bars;
I, crouching, lay between
Tense-listening armies peering through the night,
Twin giants bound by tentacles unseen.
Here in dim-shadowed light
I saw him, as a sudden movement turned
His eyes towards me, glowing eyes that burned
A moment ere his snuffling muzzle found
My trail; and then as serpents mesmerize
He chained me with those unrelenting eyes,
That muscle-sliding rhythm, knit and bound
In spare-limbed symmetry, those perfect jaws
And soft approaching pitter-patter paws.
Nearer and nearer like a wolf he crept —
That moment had my swift revolver leapt,
But terror seized me, terror born of shame
Brought flooding revelation. For he came
As one who offers comradeship deserved,
An open ally of the human race,
And sniffing at my prostrate form unnerved
He licked my face!

EDMUND BLUNDEN

1896

THE GIANT PUFFBALL

From what star I know not, but I found
Myself newborn below the coppice rail,
No bigger than the dewdrops and as round,
In a soft sward, no cattle might assail.

And so I gathered mightiness and grew
With this one dream kindling in me, that I
Should never cease from conquering light and dew
Till my white splendour touched the trembling sky.

A century of blue and stilly light
Bowed down before me, the dew came agen,
The moon my sibyl worshipped through the night,
The sun returned and long abode: but then

Hoarse drooping darkness hung me with a shroud
And switched at me with shrivelled leaves in scorn.
Red morning stole beneath a grinning cloud,
And suddenly clambering over dike and thorn

A half-moon host of churls with flags and sticks
Hallooed and hurtled up the partridge brood,
And Death clapped hands from all the echoing thicks
And trampling envy spied me where I stood;

Who haled me tired and quaking, hid me by,
And came agen after an age of cold,
And hung me in the prison-house adry
From the great crossbeam. Here defiled and old

I perish through unnumbered hours, I swoon,
Hacked with harsh knives to staunch a child's torn hand;
And all my hopes must with my body soon
Be but as crouching dust and wind-blown sand.

ALMSWOMEN

At Quincy's moat the squandering village ends,
And there in the almshouse dwell the dearest friends
Of all the village, two old dames that cling
As close as any true loves in the spring.
Long, long ago they passed three-score-and-ten,
And in this doll's house lived together then;
All things they have in common, being so poor,
And their one fear, Death's shadow at the door.
Each sundown makes them mournful, each sunrise
Brings back the brightness in their fading eyes.

Now happy go the rich fair-weather days
When on the roadside folks stare in amaze
At such a honeycomb of fruit and flowers
As mellows round their threshold; what long hours
They gloat upon their steepling hollyhocks,
Bee's balsams, feathery southernwood, and stocks,
Fiery dragon's-mouth, great mallow leaves
For salves, and lemon plants in bushy sheaves,
Shagged Esau's-hands with fine green finger-tips.
Such old sweet names are ever on their lips.
As pleased as little children where these grow,
In cobbled pattens and worn gowns they go,
Proud of their wisdom where on gooseberry shoots
They stuck eggshells to fright from coming fruits

The brisk-billed rascals; pausing still to see
Their neighbor owls saunter from tree to tree,
Or in the hushing half-light mouse the lane
Long winged and lordly.
But when those hours wane
Indoors they ponder, scared by the harsh storm
Whose pelting saracens on the window swarm,
And listen for the mail to clatter past
And church clock's deep bay withering on the blast;
They feed the fire that flings a freakish light
On pictured kings and queens grotesquely bright,
Platters and pitchers, faded calendars
And graceful hour-glass trim with lavenders.

Many a time they kiss and cry, and pray
That both be summoned in the selfsame day,
And wiseman linnet tinkling in his cage
End too with them the friendship of the age,
And all together leave their treasured room
Some bell-like evening when the May's in bloom.

SACHEVERELL SITWELL

1897

FOUNTAINS

This night is pure and clear as thrice refinèd silver.
Silence, the cape of Death, lies heavy
Round the bare shoulders of the hills.
Faint throbs and murmurs
At moments growing to a mutter, then subsiding,

Fill the night with mystery and panic.
The honey-tonguèd arguings of fountains
Stir the air with flutes and gentle voices.

The graven fountain-masks suffer and weep —
Curved with a smile, the poor mouths
Clutch at a half-remembered song
Striving to forget the agony of ever laughing, —
Laughing while they hear the secrets
Echoed from the depths of Earth beneath them.

This half-remembered song —
This flow of sad-restrainèd laughter
Jars with the jets of youthful water
Springing from the twisted masks,
For this is but the birth of water;
And singing joyfully
It springs upon the world
And wanders ceaselessly
Along its jeweled valleys to the sea
Rattling like rolls of drums
The shells and pebbles down its bed

The endless argument of water ceases,
A few drops fall heavily, splashing on the marble:
A sultan with his treasures
Seeking to gain the goodwill of his love,
Pouring before her chains of crackling pearls
And weeping heavy jealous tears
Because she will not heed him.

J. REDWOOD ANDERSON

MARY O'BRIAN

Mary O'Brian is old and she wears a black shawl,
Black against the grey grass and the grey hill beyond,
Black in the fading day on the pale cottage wall,
And she drives three cows with a bent hazel wand;
Three black cows, and they walk in a row
From the day's green pasture to the night's black stall,
With slowly swaying heads and feet moving slow.

And she will sit in the dusk by the red turf embers,
With her weary eyes fixed on the last faint glow,
And she will see again the faces she remembers,
And think of the summers that were hers long ago;
And she will start a little and draw her shawl close
As the old faces fade and the chill of life's Novembers
Stirs the dry leaves of love's flowerless rose.

And when the hearth is black and the night has filled the room,
And the night-wind has risen and the sound of the ebb-tide grows
Into a great voice that whispers in the gloom,
Still she sits in the silence — and no man knows
What sad long thoughts, what hopes and what despairs,
She stretches like a warp on her spirit's dark loom
To weave herself a garment with the shuttle of her prayers.

WILLIAM KEAN SEYMOUR

CÆSAR REMEMBERS

Cæsar, that proud man,
  Sat in his tent,
Weary with victory,
  With striving spent.

Where the grey Chilterns
  Coiled and slept
That hard-lipped Emperor
  Vigil kept.

In the thin starlight
  His glimmering hordes
Fought with the hard earth —
  Spades for swords.

Out on the hill-slopes
  His hælmèd host
Piled stark ramparts
  Rimmed with frost.

But Cæsar cared not
  For dyke and wall,
Faint and remote
  Came the bugles' call;

Soft in the shadows
  He saw, and heard,
A Roman garden,
  A Roman bird.

"Worlds to conquer!
But Cæsar fails
To add one song
To the nightingale's!"

Soft in the shadows
The tired man heard
A woman's laughter,
A woman's word.

Cæsar, shivering,
Heard repeat
Spades on the hillside,
Sentries' feet.

ELIZABETH SHANE

HUSH SONG

Och, hush ye then, och hush ye —
There's herrin's in the bay,
An' you'll be the wee fisherman
Some day — some day.

Och, rest ye then, och rest ye —
The herrin's do be small,
An' you're the boy when you'll be big
Will catch them all.

Och, hush ye then, och hush ye —
The night is dark an' wet,
An' you too wee, och heart o' mine
For fishin' yet.

Och, hush ye then, och hush ye —
'Tis cowld upon the sea,
But this wee house is warm itself
For you an' me.

Och, sleep ye now, och sleep ye —
For sure a night will come
When you'll be wakin' on the sea,
An' me at home.

SHERARD VINES

THE PROPHET

When the glory of the Lord comes, it's like a mighty wind,
You hear it roar and thunder in the forests there behind,
And when the blast is on you and the rocks begin to nod,
Your soul flaps like a pennon in the holy wind of God.

Then you fly like an eagle, and run like a wolf,
Hunt the roads till sundown, and brood on the gulf,
You are dumb as a sepulchre, for no man can afford
To miss the stinging music of the glory of the Lord.

Far, far beneath you do the great sister seas
Bellow one to other, and fall upon their knees,
The sons of God are out, and set a veil upon the moon:
They tell the seven stars that the Lord is in his noon.

Yes, it's given to a few men to run before the wind
And hear it roar and thunder in the forests there behind;
And when the blast is on them, and the rocks begin to nod
To feel their souls as thistledown in the holy wind of God.

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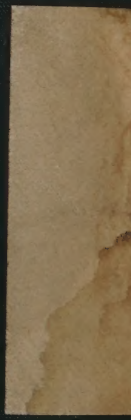
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